DODO

A DETAIL OF THE DAY

E. F. BENSON

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DODO

And far out, drifting helplessly on that grey, angry sea, I saw a small boat at the mercy of the winds and waves. And my guide said to me, 'Some call the sea "Falsehood," and that boat "Truth," and others call the sea "Truth," and the boat "Falsehood;" and, for my part, I think that one is right as the other.'—*The Professor of Ignorance.*

DODO

A DETAIL OF THE DAY

BY

E. F. BENSON

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CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER XI., ... 217

CHAPTER XII., ... 240

CHAPTER XIII., ... 252

CHAPTER XIV., ... 285

CHAPTER XV., ... 300

CHAPTER XVI., ... 323

CHAPTER XVII., ... 339

CHAPTER XVIII., ... 361

CHAPTER XIX., ... 387

CHAPTER XX., ... 410

CHAPTER XXI., ... 426

DODO

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CHAPTER XI.

IT was just three weeks after the baby's death, and Dodo was sitting in her room about eleven o'clock in the morning, yawning dismally over a novel, but she was conscious of a certain relief, a sense of effort suspended. Late the evening before, Lord Chesterford had consulted her about some business down at Harchester, and Dodo, in a moment of inspiration, had said that it must be done by someone on the spot, that an agent was not to be trusted, and that if Chesterford liked she would go. This, of course, led to his offering to go himself, and would Dodo come with him? Dodo had replied that she was quite willing to

go, but that there was no need of both of them making a tiresome journey on an infernally hot day. Chesterford had felt, rather wistfully, that he would not mind the journey, if Dodo was with him, but he had learned lately not to say such things. Dodo was apt to treat them as nonsense. 'My coming with you wouldn't make it any cooler, or less insufferably dusty,' she would have said. The result was that Chesterford went, and Dodo was left alone in London, with a distinct sense of relief and relaxation.

Dodo's next move was to send a note to Jack, saying that he was going to come and lunch with her. She was not conscious of any sense of deception in this, but she had seen that Chesterford had not cared to see anybody since the baby's death, except Mrs Vivian, whereas she longed to be in the midst of people again. So, whenever opportunities occurred, she had been in the habit of seeing what she could of her friends, but was very careful not to bore her husband with them. She was quite alive to the truth of Mrs Vivian's remarks.

But though Dodo felt a great relief in her hus-

band's absence, she was more than ever conscious of the unutterable stupidity of spending day after day doing nothing. It was something even to keep it up with Chesterford, but now there was nothing to do—nothing. Still, Jack was coming to lunch, and perhaps she might get through a few hours that way. Chesterford had said he would be back that night late or next morning.

The footman came in bearing a card. 'Jack already,' thought Dodo, with wonder. But it was not Jack. Dodo looked at it and pondered a moment. 'Tell Lady Bretton I will see her,' she said.

A few moments afterwards Lady Bretton rustled into the room. Dodo had always thought her rather like a barmaid, and she was sure that she would attract many customers at any public-house. She was charmingly pretty, and always said the right thing. Dodo felt she ought to know why she had come, but couldn't quite remember. But she was not left in doubt long.

'Dearest Dodo,' said Lady Bretton, 'I have wanted to come and see you dreadfully, only I

haven't been able. You know Lucas has been at home all this week.'

Then it flashed upon Dodo.

'He comes of age to-day, you know, and we are giving a ball. I was so dreadfully shocked to hear your bad news, and am delighted to see you looking so well considering. Is Lord Chesterford at home?'

'No,' said Dodo, as if weighing something in her mind. 'He may come to-night, but I don't really expect him till to-morrow morning.'

'Has he gone on some visit?' asked she. 'I didn't suppose—'

'No, he's only gone on business to Harchester. He hasn't, of course, been out at all. But—'

Dodo paused.

Then she got quickly up from her chair, and clapped her hands.

'Yes, I will come. I am dying to go out again Who leads the cotillion with me? Tommy Ledgers, isn't it? Oh, I shall enjoy it. I'm nearly dead for want of something to do. And he can dance, too. Yes, I'll come, but I must be back by half-past two. Chesterford will perhaps come by the

night train getting here at two. I daresay it will be late. Are you going to have the mirror figure? Do have it. There's no one like Ledgers for leading that. He led it here with me. It will be like escaping from penal servitude for life. Talk of treadmills! I'm at the point of death for want of a dance. Let it begin punctually. I'll be there by ten sharp if you like. Tell Prince Waldenech I'm coming. He wrote to say he wouldn't go unless I did. He's badly in love with me. That doesn't matter, but he can dance. All those Austrians can. I'm going to have a regular debauch.'

'I'm delighted,' said Lady Bretton. 'I came here to ask you whether you couldn't possibly come, but I hardly dared. Dear Dodo, it's charming of you. It will make all the difference. I was in despair this morning. I had asked Milly Cornish to lead with Ledgers, but she refused, unless I asked you again first. We'll have a triumphant arch, if you like, with "Welcome to Dodo" on it.'

'Anything you like,' said Dodo; 'the madder the merrier. Let's see, how does the hoop figure go?'

Dodo snatched up an old cotillion hoop from where it stood in the corner with fifty other relics, and began practising it.

'We must have this right,' she said; 'it's quite new to most people. You must tell Tommy to come here for an hour this afternoon, and we'll rehearse. You start with it in the left hand, don't you, and then cross it over, and hold your partner's hoop in the right. Damn—I beg your pardon—but it doesn't go right. No, you must send Ledgers. Shall I want castanets? I think I'd better. We must have the new Spanish figure. Ah, that is right.'

Dodo went through a series of mysterious revolutions with the hoop.

'I feel like a vampire who's got hold of blood again,' said Dodo, pausing to get her breath. 'I feel like a fish put back into the water, like a convict back in his own warm nest. No charge for mixed metaphors. Supplied free, gratis, *and* for nothing,' she said, with emphasis.

Lady Bretton put her head a little on one side, and gushed at her. Her manners were always perfect.

'Now, I'm going to send you off,' said Dodo. 'Jack's coming to lunch, and I've got a lot to do. Jack who? Jack Broxton, of course. Will he be with you to-night? No? I shall tell him I'm coming. You see if he doesn't come too. You sent him a card, of course. After lunch I shall want Tommy. Mind he comes. Good-bye.'

Dodo felt herself again. There was the double relief of Chesterford's absence, and there was something to do. She hummed a little French song, snapped her castanets, and pitched her novel into the grate.

'Oh, this great big world,' she said, 'you've been dead, and I've been dead for a month. Won' we have a resurrection this evening! Come in, Jack,' she went on, as the door opened. 'Here's your hoop. Catch it! Do you know the hoop figure? That's right; no, in your left hand. That's all with the hoop. Now we waltz.'

Jack had a very vague idea as to why he happened to be waltzing with Dodo. It seemed to him rather like 'Alice in Wonderland.' However, he supposed it was all right, and on they went. A collision with the table, and a slow

Stygian stream of ink dropping in a fatal, relentless manner on to the carpet, caused a stoppage, and Dodo condescended to explain, which she did all in one sentence.

'Chesterford's gone to Harchester after some stuffy business, and I'm going to the Brettons' ball, you must come, Jack, I'm going to lead the cotillion with Tommy, I simply must go. I'm dying to go out again; and, oh, Jack, I'm awfully glad to see you, and why haven't you been here for the last twenty years, and I'm out of breath, never mind the ink.'

Dodo stopped from sheer exhaustion, and dropped a blotting-pad on to the pool of ink, which had now assumed the importance of an inland lake.

'Blanche has been here this morning,' she continued, 'and I told her I'd come, and would bring you. You must come, Jack. You're an awfully early bird, and I haven't got any worms for you, because they've all turned, owing to the hot weather, I suppose, and I feel so happy I can't talk sense. Tommy's coming this afternoon to practise. What time is it? Let's go and have lunch. That will do instead of worms. If Chester-

ford goes to attend to bailiff's business, why shouldn't I go and dance? It really is a kindness to Blanche. Nothing ought to stand in the way of a kindness. She was in despair; she told me so herself. She might have committed suicide. It would have been pleasant to have a countess's corpse's blood on your head, wouldn't it?'

'I thought Chesterford was here,' said Jack.

'Oh, I'm not good enough for you,' remarked Dodo. 'That's very kind of you. I suppose you wouldn't have come, if you had known I should have had no one to meet you. Well, there isn't a soul, so you can go away if you like, or join the footmen in the servants' hall. Oh, I am so glad to be doing something again.'

'I'm awfully glad you're coming to-night,' said Jack; 'it'll do you good.'

'Ain't it a lark,' remarked Dodo, in pure Lancashire dialect, helping herself largely to beefsteak. 'Jack, what'll you drink? Do you want beer? I'll treat you to what you like. You may dissolve my pearls in vinegar, if it will give you any satisfaction. Fetch Mr Broxton my pearls, I mean some beer,' said Dodo, upsetting the salt.

'Really, Jack, I believe I've gone clean cracked. I've upset a lot of salt over your coat. Pour some claret upon it. Oh, no, that's the other way round, but I don't see why it shouldn't do. Have some more steak, Jack. Where's the gravy spoon? Jack, have you been trying to steal the silver? Oh, there it is. Have some chopped carrots with it. Who's that ringing at our door-bell? I'm a little— Who is it, Walter? Just go out and see. Miss Staines? Tell her there's lunch going on and Jack's here. There's an inducement. Jack, do you like Edith? She's rather loud. Yes, I agree, but we all make a noise at times. Can't she stop? Oh, very well, she may go away again. I believe she wouldn't come because you were here, Jack. I don't think she likes you, but you're a very good sort in your way. Jack, will you say grace? Chesterford always says grace. Well, for a Christian gentleman not to know a grace! Bring some cigarettes, Walter, or would you rather have a cigar, Jack? And some black coffee. Well, I'm very grateful for *my* good dinner, and I don't mind saying so.'

Dodo went on talking at the top of her voice, quite continuously. She asked Jack a dozen questions without waiting for the answer.

'Where shall we go now, Jack?' she continued, when they had finished coffee — Dodo took three cups and a cigarette with each. 'We must go somewhere. I can leave word for Ledgers to wait. Let's go to the Zoo and see all the animals in cages. Ah, I sympathise with them. I have only just got out of my cage myself.'

Dodo dragged Jack off to the Zoo, on the top of a bus, and bought buns for the animals, and fruit for the birds, and poked a fierce lion with the end of her parasol, which the brute bit off, and nearly fell over into the polar bear's tank, and had all her money stolen by a pickpocket.

Then she went back home, and found Lord Ledgers, whom she put through his paces, and then she had tea, and dressed for the ball. She had ordered a very remarkable ball-dress from Worth's, just before the baby's death, which had never yet seen the light. It was a soft grey texture, which Dodo said looked like a sunlit mist, and it was strictly half mourning. She felt it was

a badge of her freedom, and put it on with a fresh burst of exultation. She had a large bouquet of orchids, which Lord Bretton had caused to be sent her, and a fan painted by Watteau, and a French hair-dresser came and 'did' her hair. By this time dinner was ready; and after dinner she sat in her room smoking and singing French songs to Lord Ledgers, who had come to fetch her, and at half-past nine the carriage was announced. About the same moment another carriage drove up to the door, and as Dodo ran downstairs she found her husband in the hall.

She looked at him a moment with undisguised astonishment, and a frown gathered on her forehead.

'You here?' she said. 'I thought you weren't coming till late.'

'I caught the earlier train,' he said; 'and where are you off to?'

'I'm going to the Brettons' ball,' said Dodo frankly; 'I can't wait.'

He turned round and faced her.

'Oh, Dodo, so soon,' he said.

'Yes, yes, I must,' said Dodo. 'You know this

kills me, this sticking here with nothing to do from day to day, and nothing to see, and nobody to talk to. It's death; I can't bear it.'

'Very well,' he said gently, 'you are quite right to go if you want to. But I am not coming, Dodo.'

Dodo's face brightened.

'No, dear, they don't expect you. I thought you wouldn't be back.'

'I shouldn't go in any case,' said he.

Lord Ledgers was here heard to remark 'By Gad!'

Dodo laid her hand on his shoulder, conscious of restraining her impatience.

'No, that's just the difference between us,' she said. 'Go on, Tommy, get into the carriage. You don't want me not to go, dear, do you?'

'No, you are right to go, if you wish to,' he said again.

Dodo grew impatient.

'Really, you might be more cordial about it,' she said. 'I needn't have consulted you at all.'

Lord Chesterford was not as meek as Moses. He was capable of a sense of injustice.

'I don't know that you did consult me much,' he said. 'You mean to go in any case.'

'Very well,' said Dodo, 'I do mean to go. Good-night, old boy. I sha'n't be very late. But I don't mean to quarrel with you.'

Lord Chesterford turned into his room. But he would not keep Dodo, as she wished to go, even if he could have done so.

Ledgers was waiting in the carriage.

'Oh, the devil,' said Dodo, as she stepped in.

Lady Bretton's ball is still talked about, I believe, in certain circles, though it ought to have been consigned, with all other events of last year, to oblivion. It was very brilliant, and several princes shed the light of their presence on it. But, as Lord Ledgers was heard to remark afterwards, 'There are many princes, but there is only one Dodo.' He felt as if he was adapting a quotation from the Koran, which was somehow suitable to the positive solemnity of the occasion. Dodo can only be described as having been indescribable. Lucas, Lady Bretton's eldest son, in honour of whose coming of age the ball was given, can hardly allude to it even now. His emotions

expressed themselves feebly in his dressing with even more care than usual, in hanging round Eaton Square, and in leaving cards on the Chesterfords as often as was decent.

Dodo was conscious of a frenzied desire to make the most of it, and to drown remembrance, for in the background of her mind was another picture, that she did not care to look at. There was a man she knew, leaning over a small dead child. The door of the room was half open, and a woman, brilliantly dressed, was turning to go out, looking back over her shoulder with a smile, half of impatience, half of pity, at the kneeling figure in the room. Through the half-open door came sounds of music and rhythmical steps, and a blaze of light. This picture had started unbidden into Dodo's mind, as she and Ledgers drove up to Lady Bretton's door, with such sudden clearness that she half wondered whether she had ever actually seen it. It reminded her of one of Orchardson's silent, well-appointed tragedies. In any case it gave her a rather unpleasant twinge, and she determined to shut it out for the rest of the evening, and, to do her justice, no one would

have guessed that Dodo's brilliance was due to anything but pure spontaneity, or that, even in the deepest shades of her inmost mind, there was any remembrance that it needed an effort to stifle.

Many women, though few men, were surprised to see her there, and there was no one who was not glad; but the question arose more than once in the minds of two or three people, 'Would society stand it if she didn't happen to be herself?' Dodo had treated a select party of her friends to a private exhibition of skirt-dancing during supper-time. The music from the band was quite loud enough to be heard distinctly in a small, rather unfrequented sitting-out room, and there Dodo had displayed her incomparable grace of movement and limb to the highest advantage. Dodo danced that night with unusual perfection, and who has not felt the exquisite beauty of such motion? Her figure, clad in its long, clinging folds of diaphanous, almost luminous texture, stood out like a radiant statue of dawn against the dark panelling of the room; her graceful figure bending this way and that, her wonderful white arms now

holding aside her long skirt, or clasped above her head; above all, the supreme distinction and conscious modesty of every posture seemed, to the little circle who saw her, to be almost a new revelation of the perfection of form, colour and grace.

Jack knew Dodo pretty well, but he stood and wondered. Was she a devil? was she a tiger? or was she, after all, a woman? Dodo had told him what had happened that evening, and yet he did not condemn her utterly. He knew how prison-like her life must have been to her during the last month. It was a thousand pities that Dodo's meat was Chesterford's poison, but he no more blamed Dodo for eating her meat than he blamed Chesterford for avoiding his poison; and to advance the conventional argument against Dodo, that her behaviour was not usual, was equivalent to saying, 'Why do behave like yourself?' rather than 'Why don't you behave like other people?' Dodo's estimate of herself, as purely normal, was only another instance of her very abnormalness. No, on the whole, she was not a devil. The other question was harder to settle. Jack remembered a tigress he had seen that day with her at the Zoo. The

brute had a small and perfectly fascinating tiger cub, in which she took a certain maternal pride; but when feeding-time came near, and the cub continued to be importunate, she gave it a cuff with her big velvety paw, and sent it staggering to the corner. Dodo's tiger cub was a mixture between Chesterford and the dead child, and Dodo's feeding-time had come round. Here she was feeding with an enviable appetite, and where was the cub? The tigress element was not wholly absent.

And yet, withal, she was a woman. Is it that certain attributes of pure womanliness run through the female of animals, or that every woman has a touch of the tigress about her? Jack felt incompetent to decide.

Dodo's dance came to an end. She accepted Prince Waldenech's arm, and went down to supper. As he advanced to her, Dodo dropped a curtsey, and he stooped and kissed her hand. 'The brute,' thought Jack, as he strolled out into the ballroom, where people were beginning to collect again. Many turned and looked at Dodo as she passed out with her handsome partner. The glow of exer-

cise and excitement and success burned brightly in her cheeks, and no one accused Dodo of using rouge. The supper was spread on a number of small tables, laid for four or six each. The Prince led her to an empty one, and sat down by her side.

'I have seen many beautiful things,' he said, in French, which permits a man to say more than he may in English, 'but none so beautiful as what I have seen to-night.'

Dodo was far too accomplished a coquette to pretend not to know what he meant. She made him a charming little obeisance.

'Politeness required that of your Highness,' she said. 'That is only my due, you know.'

'I can never give you your due,' said he.

'My due in this case is the knowledge I have pleased you.'

Dodo felt suddenly a little uncomfortable. The forgotten picture flashed for a moment across her inward eye. She spoke of other things: praised the prettiness of the ballroom, the excellence of the band.

'Lady Bretton has given a fine setting to the

diamond,' said the Prince, 'but the diamond is not hers.'

Dodo laughed. He was a little ponderous, and he deserved to be told so.

'You Austrians have beautiful manners,' she said, 'but you are too serious. English are always accused of sharing that fault, but anyhow, when they pay compliments, they have at least the air of not meaning what they say.'

'That is the fault of the English, or of the compliment.'

'No one means what they say when they pay compliments,' said Dodo. 'They are only a kind of formula to avoid the unpleasantness of saying nothing.'

'Austrians seldom pay compliments,' said he; 'but when they do, they mean them.'

'Ouf,' said Dodo; 'that sounds homelike to you, doesn't it? All Austrians say 'ouf' in books—do they really say 'ouf,' by the way— What a bald way of saying that I needn't expect any more to-night. Really, Prince, that's rather unflattering of you. No, don't excuse yourself; I understand perfectly. I'm not fishing for any more. Come, there's the *pas de quatre* beginning. That's the

'Old Kent Road' tune. It's much the best. What do you suppose "Knocked him in the Old Kent Road" means? No foreigner has ever been able to translate it to me yet. This is your dance, isn't it? Oh, there's no need for you to look at my programme; you have one of your own, and it's disgraceful that you cannot remember without that.'

The ball went on and on, and Dodo seemed to gather fresh strength and brilliance with each hour. Extra dances were added and still added, and many who were tired with dancing stayed and watched her. The princes went away, and nobody noticed their departure. If Cleopatra herself had suddenly entered the ballroom, she would have found herself at a discount. It was the culmination of Dodo's successes. She seemed different in kind, as well as in degree, from the crowd around her. Pretty women seemed suddenly plain and middle-aged; well-dressed women looked dowdy beside her, and when at length, as the electric light began to pale perceptibly before the breaking day, Dodo asked her partner to take her to Lady Bretton, the dancers stopped, and followed Dodo and Prince Waldenech for

she was dancing with him, to where Lady Bretton was standing.

'It has been heavenly,' said Dodo. 'It's a dreadful bore to have people come and say how much they have enjoyed themselves, but I've done it now. Tell Lucas I wish he would come of age every year; he really is a public benefactor.'

She took Prince Waldenech's arm, and stood waiting with him, while her carriage detached itself from the others which lined the square, and drove up to the door. And, as they stood there, the crowd followed her slowly out of the ballroom, still silent, and still watching her, and lined the stairs, as she passed down to the front door.

Then, when she had got into her carriage, and had driven off, they looked at each other as if they had all been walking in their sleep, and no one knew exactly why they were there. And a quarter of an hour later the rooms were completely empty.

Meanwhile, as Dodo drove back through the still, cool, morning air, she threw down the windows of her carriage, and drew in deep satisfied breaths

of its freshness. She thought of the crowds who had followed her down to the door, and laughed for pleasure. 'It's life, it's life,' she thought. 'They followed me like sheep. Ah, how I love it!'

It was nearly six when she reached home. 'Decidedly it would be too absurd to go to bed,' she thought. 'I shall go for a glorious gallop, and come back to breakfast with Chesterford. Tell them to saddle Starlight at once,' she said to the footman; 'I sha'n't want a groom. And tell Lord Chesterford, when he awakes, that I shall be back to breakfast.'

CHAPTER XII.

CHESTERFORD did not let Dodo see how strongly he had felt on the subject of the ball. He argued to himself that it would do no good. Dodo would not understand, or, understanding, would misunderstand the strength of his feeling, and he did not care that she should know that he thought her heartless. He was quite conscious that matters were a little strained between them, though Dodo apparently was sublimely unaware of it. She had a momentary nervousness when they met at breakfast, on the morning after the ball, that Chesterford was going to make a fuss, and she could not quite see what it would end in, if the subject was broached. But he came in looking as usual. He told her how matters had gone with him on the previous day, and had recounted. with a certain humour, a few sharp words which

an old lady in his railway carriage had addressed to him, because he didn't help her to hand out two large cages of canaries which she was taking home.

Dodo welcomed all this as a sign of grace, and was only too happy to meet her husband half-way. He had been a trifle melodramatic on the previous evening, but we are all liable to make mountains out of molehills at times, she thought. Personally her inclination was to make molehills out of mountains, but that was only a difference in temperament; both implied a judgment at fault, and she was quite willing to forgive and forget. In a word she was particularly nice to him, and when breakfast was over she took his arm, and led him away to her room.

'Sit down in that very big chair, old boy,' she said, 'and twiddle your thumbs while I write some notes. I'm going to see Mrs Vivian this morning, and your lordship may come in my ladyship's carriage if it likes. Is lordship masculine, feminine, or neuter, Chesterford? Anyhow, it's wrong to say your lordship may come in your carriage, because

lordship is the nominative to the sentence, and is in the third person—what was I saying? Oh, yes, you may come if it likes, and drop me there, and then go away for about half an hour, and then come back, and then we'll have lunch together at home.

'I've got to go to some stupid committee at the club,' said Chesterford, 'but that's not till twelve. I'll send your carriage back for you, but I sha'n't be able to be in at lunch.'

'Oh, very good,' remarked Dodo. 'I'm sorry I married you. I might be a lone lorn widdy for all you care. He prefers lunching at his club,' she went on dramatically, addressing the black virgin, 'to having his chop at home with the wife of his bosom. How sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless Chesterford!'

Dodo proceeded to write her notes, and threw them one by one at her husband as he sat contentedly by the window, in the very big chair that Dodo had indicated.

Dodo's correspondence was as varied as the collection of photographs on her mantelpiece. The first note was to her groom at Winston, telling him

to have another riding-horse sent up at once, as her own particular mare had gone lame. It missed Chesterford's head, and fell with an ominous clatter among some *bric-à-brac* and china.

'That'll be a bill for you to pay, darling,' said Dodo sweetly. 'Why didn't you put your silly old head in the light?'

The next was a slightly better shot, and fell right side upwards on to Chesterford's knee, but with the address upside down to him. He looked at it vaguely.

'His Serene Highness who?' he asked, spelling it out.

'That's not grammar,' said Dodo. 'It's only to Prince Waldenech. He is Serene, isn't he? He looks it, anyhow. He was at the Brettons' last night. Austrian but amiable.'

Chesterford was fingering the envelope.

'He's an unmitigated blackguard,' he said, after a little consideration. 'I wish you'd let me tear it up, Dodo. What on earth have you got to say to him?'

'I shall have to write it again, dear, if you do,' said she, conscious of bridling a rising irritation.

'He really is an awful brute,' he repeated.

'Oh, my dear Chesterford, what does that matter?' asked Dodo, impatiently tapping the floor with the toe of her shoe. 'It isn't my business to go raking up the character of people I'm introduced to.'

'You mean you don't mind what a man's character is, as long as he's agreeable.'

'It isn't my business to be court inquisitor,' she said. 'Half of what one hears about people isn't true, and the other half—well, all you can say is, that it isn't exactly false.'

Dodo could lose her temper very quickly on occasions, especially when she was in a hurry, as she was now.

'My dear Dodo, do you happen to know the story of—'

'No, I don't,' she said vehemently. 'Shall I seem rude if I say I don't want to? I really think you might find something better to do than tell scandalous stories about people you don't know.'

'I know all I want to know about Prince Waldenech,' said Chesterford, rising.

'You'll know more about him soon,' remarked Dodo, 'because I've asked him to stay at Winston. I suppose you think I wanted to make a secret about it. I had no such intention, I assure you.'

'Is this note to ask him to come?' he inquired.

'Certainly it is,' said Dodo defiantly.

'I may as well tear it up,' said he. 'I don't mean him to be asked, Dodo. I don't wish to have him in the house.'

Dodo had lost her temper thoroughly.

'His being asked to Winston is immaterial,' she said, with scorn in her voice. 'You certainly have the power to prevent his coming to your house. Your power I must regard, your wishes I shall not. I can see him in London with perfect ease.'

'You mean you attach no weight to my wishes in this matter?' said Chesterford.

'None.'

'Will no knowledge of what the man is really like, stop you holding further intercourse with him?' he asked.

'None whatever, now!'

'I don't wish it to be known that my wife associates with such people,' he said.

'Your wife does not regard it in that light,' replied Dodo. 'I have no intention of proclaiming the fact from the housetops.'

To do Chesterford justice he was getting angry too.

'It's perfectly intolerable that there should be this sort of dispute between you and me, Dodo,' he said.

'That is the first point on which we have not differed.'

'You entirely decline to listen to reason?'

'To your reasons, you mean,' said Dodo.

'To mine or any honest man's.'

Dodo burst out into a harsh, mirthless laugh.

'Ah, you're beginning to be jealous?' she said. 'It is very bourgeois to be jealous.'

Chesterford coloured angrily.

'That is an insult, Dodo,' he said. 'Remember that there is a courtesy due even from a wife to a husband. Besides that, you know the contrary.'

'Really, I know nothing of the sort,' she returned. 'Your whole conduct, both last night and this morning, has been so melodramatic, that I begin to suspect all sorts of latent virtues in you.'

'We are wandering from the point,' said he. 'Do you mean that nothing will deter you from seeing this Austrian?'

'He is received in society,' said Dodo; 'he is presentable, he is even amusing. Am I to tell him that my husband is afraid he'll corrupt my morals? If people in general cut him, I don't say that I should continue to cultivate his acquaintance. It is absurd to run amuck of such conventions. If you had approached me in a proper manner, I don't say that I mightn't have seen my way to meeting your wishes.'

'I don't feel I am to blame in that respect,' said he.

'That shows you don't know how far we are apart,' she replied.

He was suddenly frightened. He came closer to her.

'Far apart, Dodo? We?'

'It seems to me that this interview has revealed some astonishing differences of opinion between us,' she said. 'I don't wish to multiply words. You have told me what you think on the subject, and I have told you what I think. You have claimed the power a husband certainly possesses, and I claim the liberty that my husband cannot deprive me of. Or perhaps you wish to look me up. We quite understand one another. Let us agree to differ. Give me that note, please. I suppose you can trust me not to send it. I should like to keep it. It is interesting to count the milestones.'

Dodo spoke with the recklessness of a woman's anger, which is always much more unwanton than that of a man. A man does not say cruel things when he is angry, because they are cruel, but because he is angry. Dodo was cruel because she wished to be cruel. He gave her the note, and turned to leave the room. Dodo's last speech made it impossible for him to say more. The only thing he would not sacrifice to his love was his honour or hers. But Dodo suddenly saw

the horrible impossibility of the situation. She had not the smallest intention of living on bad terms with her husband. They had quarrelled, it was a pity, but it was over. A storm may only clear the air; it is not always the precursor of bad weather. The air wanted clearing, and Dodo determined that this should not be the prelude of rain and wind. To her, of course, the knowledge that she did not love her husband had long been a commonplace, but to him the truth was coming in fierce, blinding flashes, and by their light he could see that a great flood had come down into his happy valley, carrying desolation before it, and between him and Dodo stretched a tawny waste of water. But Dodo had no intention of quarrelling with him, or maintaining a dignified reserve in their daily intercourse. That would be quite unbearable, and she wished there to be no misunderstanding on this point.

'Chesterford,' she said, 'we've quarrelled, and that's a pity. I hardly ever quarrel, and it was stupid of me. I am sorry. But I have no intention of standing on my dignity, and I sha'n't allow you to stand on yours. I shall pull you

down, and you'll go flop. You object to something which I propose to do, you exert your rights, as far as having him in the house goes, and I exert mine by going to see him. I shall go this afternoon. Your veto on his coming to Winston seems quite as objectionable to me, as my going to see him does to you. That's our position; accept it. Let us understand each other completely. *C'est aimer.* As she spoke she recovered her equanimity, and she smiled serenely on him. Scenes like this left no impression on her. The tragedy passed over her head; and, though it was written in the lines of her husband's face, she did not trouble to read it. She got up from her chair and went to him. He was standing with his hands clasped behind him near the door. She laid her hands on his shoulder, and gave him a little shake.

'Now, Chesterford, I'm going to make up,' she said. 'Twenty minutes is heaps of time for the most quarrelsome people to say sufficient nasty things in, and time's up. I'm going to behave exactly as usual. I hate quarrelling, and you don't look as if it agreed with you. Kiss me this

moment. No, not on the top of my head. That's better. My carriage ought to be ready by this time, and you are coming with me as far as Prince's Gate.'

CHAPTER XIII.

LORD and Lady Chesterford were sitting at breakfast at Winston towards the end of September. He had an open letter in front of him propped up against his cup, and between mouthfuls of fried fish he glanced at it.

'Dodo.'

No answer.

'Dodo,' rather louder.

Dodo was also reading a letter, which covered two sheets and was closely written. It seemed to be interesting, for she had paused with a piece of fish on the end of her fork, and had then laid it down again. This time, however, she heard.

'Oh, what?' she said abstractedly. 'Jack's coming to-day; I've just heard from him. He's going to bring his hunter. You can get some cub-

hunting, I suppose, Chesterford? The hunt itself doesn't begin till the 15th does it?'

'Ah, I'm glad he can come,' said Chesterford. 'Little Spencer would be rather hard to amuse alone. But that isn't what I was going to say.'

'What is it?' said Dodo, relapsing into her letter.

'The bailiff writes to tell me that they have discovered a rich coal shaft under the Far Oaks.' A pause. 'But, Dodo, you are not listening.'

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'Do you know, Jack nearly shot himself the other day at a grouse drive?'

'I don't care,' said Chesterford brutally. 'Listen, Dodo. Tompkinson says they've discovered a rich coal shaft under the Far Oaks. Confound the man, I wish he hadn't.'

'Oh, Chesterford, how splendid!' said Dodo, dropping her letter in earnest. 'Dig it up and spend it on your party, and they'll make you a duke for certain. I want to be a duchess very much. Good morning, your grace,' said Dodo reflectively.

'Oh, that's impossible,' said he. 'I never thought of touching it, but the ass tells me that he's seen

the news of it in the *Staffordshire Herald.* So I suppose everybody knows, and I shall be pestered.'

But do you mean to say you're going to let the coal stop there?' asked Dodo.

'Yes, dear, I can't possibly touch it. It goes right under all those oaks, and under the Memorial Chapel, close to the surface.'

'But what does that matter?' asked Dodo, in real surprise.

'I can't possibly touch it,' said he; 'you must see that. Why, the chapel would have to come down, and the oaks, and we don't want a dirty coal shaft in the Park.'

'Chesterford, how ridiculous!' exclaimed Dodo. 'Do you mean you're going to leave thousands of pounds lying there in the earth?'

'I can't discuss it, dear, even with you,' said he. 'The only question is whether we can stop the report of it going about.'

Dodo felt intensely irritated.

'Really you are most unreasonable,' she said. 'I did flatter myself that I had a reasonable husband. You were unreasonable about the Brettons'

ball, and you were unreasonable about Prince Waldenech's coming here, and you are unreasonable about this.'

Chesterford lost his patience a little.

'About the Brettons' ball,' he said, 'there was only one opinion, and that was mine. About the Prince's coming here, which we agreed not to talk about, you know the further reason. I don't like saying such things. You are aware what that officious ass Clayton told me was said at the club. Of course it was an insult to you, and a confounded lie, but I don't care for such things to be said about my wife. And about this—'

'About this,' said Dodo, 'you are as obstinate as you were about those other things. Excuse me if I find you rather annoying.'

Chesterford felt sick at heart.

'Ah, Dodo,' he said, 'cannot you believe in me at all?' He rose and stood by her. 'My darling, you must know how I would do anything for love of you. But these are cases in which that clashes with duty. I only want to be loved a little. Can't you see there are some things I cannot help doing, and some I must do?'

'The things that you like doing,' said Dodo, in a cool voice pouring out some more tea. 'I don't wish to discuss this either. You know my opinion. It is absurd to quarrel; I dislike quarrelling with anybody, and more especially a person whom I live with. Please take your hand away, I can't reach the sugar.'

Dodo returned to her letter. Chesterford stood by her for a moment, and then left the room.

'It gets more and more intolerable every day. I can't bear quarrelling; it makes me ill,' thought Dodo, with a fine sense of irresponsibility. 'And I know he'll come and say he was sorry he said what he did. Thank goodness, Jack comes to-day.'

Chesterford, meanwhile, was standing in the hall, feeling helpless and bewildered. This sort of thing was always happening now, do what he could; and the intervals were not much better. Dodo treated him with a passive tolerance that was very hard to bear. Even her frank determination to keep on good terms with her husband had undergone considerable modification. She was silent and indifferent. Now and then when he came into her room he heard, as he passed down the pas-

sage, the sound of her piano or her voice, but when he entered Dodo would break off and ask him what he wanted. He half wished that he did not love her, but he found himself sickening and longing for Dodo to behave to him as she used. It would have been something to know that his presence was not positively distasteful to her. Dodo no longer 'kept it up,' as Jack said. She did not pat his hand, or call him a silly old dear, or pull his moustache, as once she did. He had once taken those little things as a sign of her love. He had found in them the pleasure that Dodo's smallest action always had for him; but now even they, the husk and shell of what had never existed, had gone from him, and he was left with that which was at once his greatest sorrow and his greatest joy, his own love for Dodo. And Dodo—God help him! he had learned it well enough now—Dodo did not love him, and never had loved him. He wondered what the end would be—whether his love, too, would die. In that case he foresaw that they would very likely go on living together as fifty other people lived—being polite to each other, and gracefully

tolerant of each other's presence; that nobody would know, and the world would say, 'What a model and excellent couple.'

So he stood there, biting the ends of his long moustache. Then he said to himself, 'I was beastly to her. What the devil made me say all those things.'

He went back to the dining-room, and found Dodo as he had left her.

'Dodo, dear,' he said, 'forgive me for being so cross. I said a lot of abominable things.'

Dodo was rather amused. She knew this would happen.

'Oh, yes,' she said; 'it doesn't signify. But are you determined about the coal mine?'

Chesterford was disappointed and chilled. He turned on his heel and went out again. Dodo raised her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders imperceptibly, and returned to her letter.

If you had asked Dodo when this state of things began she could probably not have told you. She would have said, 'Oh, it came on by degrees. It began by my being bored with him, and culminated when I no longer concealed it.' But Chesterford, to whom daily intercourse had become an

awful struggle between his passionate love for Dodo and his bitter disappointment at what he would certainly have partly attributed to his own stupidity and inadequacy, could have named the day and hour when he first realised how far he was apart from his wife. It was when he returned by the earlier train and met Dodo in the hall going to her dance; that moment had thrown a dangerously clear light over the previous month. He argued to himself, with fatal correctness, that Dodo could not have stopped caring for him in a moment, and he was driven to the inevitable conclusion that she had been drifting away from him for a long time before that; indeed, had she ever been near him? But he was deeply grateful to those months when he had deceived himself, or she had deceived him, into believing that she cared for him. He knew well that they had been the happiest in his life, and though the subsequent disappointment was bitter, it had not embittered him. His love for Dodo had a sacredness for him that nothing could remove; it was something separate from the rest of his life, that had stooped from heaven and entered into it, and lo!

it was glorified. That memory was his for ever, nothing could rob him of that.

In August Dodo had left him. They had settled a series of visits in Scotland, after a fortnight at their own house, but after that Dodo had made arrangements apart from him. She had to go and see her mother, she had to go here and there, and half way through September, when Chesterford had returned to Harchester expecting her the same night, he found a postcard from her, saying she had to spend three days with someone else, and the three days lengthened into a week, and it was only yesterday that Dodo had come, and people were arriving that very evening. There was only one conclusion to be drawn from all this, and not even he could help drawing it.

Jack and Mr Spencer and Maud, now Mrs Spencer, arrived that evening. Maud had started a sort of small store of work, and the worsted and crochet went on with feverish rapidity. It had become a habit with her before her marriage, and the undeveloped possibilities, that no doubt lurked within it, had blossomed under her husband's care. For there was a demand beyond the limits of

supply for her woollen shawls and comforters. Mr Spencer's parish was already speckled with testimonies to his wife's handiwork, and Maud's dream of being some day useful to somebody was finding a glorious fulfilment.

Dodo, I am sorry to say, found her sister more unsatisfactory than ever. Maud had a sort of confused idea that it helped the poor if she dressed untidily, and this was a ministry that came without effort. Dodo took her in hand as soon as she arrived, and made her presentable. 'Because you are a clergyman's wife, there is no reason that you shouldn't wear a tucker or something round your neck,' said she. 'Your sister is a marchioness, and when you stay with her you must behave as if you were an honourable. There will be time to sit in the gutter when you get back to Gloucester.'

Dodo also did her duty by Mr Spencer. She called him Algernon in the friendliest way, and gave him several lessons at billiards. This done she turned to Jack.

The three had been there several days, and Dodo was getting impatient. Jack and Chester-

ford went out shooting, and she was left to entertain the other two. Mr Spencer's reluctance to shoot was attributable not so much to his aversion to killing live animals, as his inability to slay. But when Dodo urged on him that he would soon learn, he claimed the higher motive. She was rather silent, for she was thinking about something important.

Dodo was surprised at the eagerness with which she looked forward to Jack's coming. Somehow, in a dim kind of way, she regarded him as the solution of her difficulties. She felt pretty certain Jack would do as he was asked, and she had made up her mind that when Jack went away she would go with him to see friends at other houses to which he was going. And Chesterford? Dodo's scheme did not seem to take in Chesterford. She had painted a charming little picture in her own mind as to where she should go, and whom she would see, but she certainly was aware that Chesterford did not seem to come in. It would spoil the composition, she thought, to introduce another figure. That would be a respite, anyhow. But after that, what then? Dodo had

found it bad enough coming back this September, and she could not contemplate renewing this *tête-à-tête* that went on for months. And by degrees another picture took its place — a dim one, for the details were not worked out—but in that picture there were only two figures. The days went on and Dodo could bear it no longer.

One evening she went into the smoking-room after tea. Chesterford was writing letters, and Maud and her husband were sitting in the drawing room. It may be presumed that Maud was doing crochet. Jack looked up with a smile as Dodo entered.

'Hurrah,' he said, 'I haven't had a word with you since we came. Come and talk, Dodo.'

But Dodo did not smile.

'How have you been getting on?' continued Jack, looking at the fire. 'You see I haven't lost my interest in you.'

'Jack,' said Dodo solemnly, 'you are right, and I was wrong. And I can't bear it any longer.'

Jack did not need explanations.

'Ah!'—then after a moment, 'poor Chesterford!'

'I don't see why "poor Chesterford,"' said Dodo,

'any more than "poor me." He was quite satisfied, anyhow, for some months, for a year in fact, more or less, and I was never satisfied at all. I haven't got a particle of pride left in me, or else I shouldn't be telling you. I can't bear it. If you only knew what I have been through you would pity me as well. It has been a continual effort for me; surely that is something to pity. And one day I broke down; I forget when, it is immaterial. Oh, why couldn't I love him! I thought I was going to, and it was all a wretched mistake.'

Dodo sat with her hands clasped before her, with something like tears in her eyes.

'I am not all selfish,' she went on; 'I am sorry for him, too, but I am so annoyed with him that I lose my sorrow whenever I see him. Why couldn't he have accepted the position sooner? We might have been excellent friends then, but now that is impossible. I have got past that. I cannot even be good friends with him. Oh, it isn't my fault; you know I tried to behave well.'

Jack felt intensely uncomfortable.

'I can't help you, Dodo,' he said. 'It is useless for me to say I am sincerely sorry. That is no word between you and me.'

Dodo, for once in her life, seemed to have something to say, and not be able to say it.

At last it came out with an effort.

'Jack, do you still love me?'

Dodo did not look at him, but kept her eyes on the fire.

Jack did not pause to think.

'Before God, Dodo,' he said, 'I believe I love you more than anything in the world.'

'Will you do what I ask you?'

This time he did pause. He got up and stood before the fire. Still Dodo did not look at him.

'Ah, Dodo,' he said, 'what are you going to ask? There are some things I cannot do.'

'It seems to me this love you talk of is a very weak thing,' said Dodo. 'It always fails, or is in danger of failing, at the critical point. I believe I could do anything for the man I loved. I did not think so once. But I was wrong, as I have been in my marriage.'

Dodo paused, but Jack said nothing; it seemed to him as if Dodo had not quite finished.

'Yes,' she said; then paused again. 'Yes, you are he.'

There was a dead silence. For one moment time seemed to Jack to have stopped, and he could have believed that that moment lasted for years, for ever.

'Oh, my God,' he murmured, 'at last.'

He was conscious of Dodo sitting there, with her eyes raised to his, and a smile on her lips. He felt himself bending forward towards her, and he thought she half rose in her chair to receive his embrace.

But the next moment she put out her hand as if to stop him.

'Stay,' she said. 'Not yet, not yet. There is something first. I will tell you what I have done. I counted on this. I have ordered the carriage after dinner at half-past ten. You and I go in that, and leave by the train. Jack, I am yours—will you come?'

Dodo had taken the plunge. She had been wavering on the brink of this for days. It had

struck her suddenly that afternoon that Jack was going away next day, and she was aware she could not contemplate the indefinite to-morrow and to-morrow without him. Like all Dodo's actions it came suddenly. The forces in her which had been drawing her on to this had gathered strength and sureness imperceptibly, and this evening they had suddenly burst through the very flimsy dam that Dodo had erected between the things she might do, and the things she might not, and their possession was complete. In a way it was inevitable. Dodo felt that her life was impossible. Chesterford, with infinite yearning and hunger at his heart, perhaps felt it too.

Jack felt as if he was waking out of some blissful dream to a return of his ordinary every-day life, which, unfortunately, had certain moral obligations attached to it. If Dodo's speech had been shorter the result might have been different. He steadied himself for a moment, for the room seemed to reel and swim, and then he answered her.

'No, Dodo,' he said hoarsely, 'I cannot do

it. Think of Chesterford! Think of anything! Don't tempt me. You know I cannot. How dare you ask me?'

Dodo's face grew hard and white. She tried to laugh, but could not manage it.

'Ah,' she said, 'the old story, isn't it? Potiphar's wife again. I really do not understand what this love of yours is. And now I have debased and humbled myself before you, and there you stand in your immaculate virtue, not caring—'

'Don't, Dodo,' he said. 'Be merciful to me, spare me. Not caring—you know it is not so. But I cannot do this. My Dodo, my darling.'

The strain was too great for him. He knelt down beside her, and kissed her hand passionately.

'I will do anything for you' he whispered, 'that is in my power to do; but this is impossible. I never yet did, with deliberate forethought, what seemed to me mean or low, and I can't now. I don't want credit for it, because I was made that way; I don't happen to be a blackguard by nature. Don't tempt me—I am too weak. But you mustn't blame me for it. You know—you must know that I love you. I left England last

autumn to cure myself of it, but it didn't answer a bit. I don't ask more than what you have just told me. That is something—isn't it, Dodo? And, if you love me, that is something for you. Don't let us degrade it, let it be a strength to us and not a weakness. You must feel it so.'

. . . . . .

There was a long silence, and in that silence the great drama of love and life, and good and evil, which has been played every day of every year since the beginning of this world, and which will never cease till all mankind are saints or sexless, filled the stage. Dodo thought, at any rate, that she loved him, and that knowledge made her feel less abased before him. All love—the love for children, for parents, for husband, for wife, for lover, for mistress—has something divine about it, or else it is not love. The love Jack felt for her was divine enough not to seek its own, to sacrifice itself on the altar of duty and loyalty, and the pure cold gods; and in its tumultuous happiness it could think of others. And Dodo's love was touched, though ever so faintly, with the

same divine spark, a something so human that it touched heaven.

Now it had so happened that, exactly three minutes before this, Maud had found that she had left a particularly precious skein of wool in another room. About ten seconds' reflection made her remember she had left it in the smoking-room, where she had sat with Dodo after lunch, who had smoked cigarettes, and lectured her on her appearance. The smoking-room had two doors, about eight yards apart, forming a little passage lighted with a skylight. The first of those doors was of wood, the second, which led into the smoking-room, of baize. The first door was opened in the ordinary manner, the second with a silent push. Maud had made this silent push at the moment when Jack was kneeling by Dodo's side, kissing her hand. Maud was not versed in the wickedness of this present world, but she realised that this was a peculiar thing for Jack to do, and she let the door swing quietly back, and ran downstairs, intending to ask her husband's advice. Chesterford's study opened into the drawing-room. During the time that Maud had been upstairs he

had gone in to find Dodo, and seeing she was not there he went back, but did not close the door behind him. A moment afterwards Maud rushed into the drawing-room from the hall, and carefully shutting the door behind her, lest anyone should hear, exclaimed,—

'Algy, I've seen something awful! I went into the smoking-room to fetch my wool, and I saw Jack kissing Dodo's hand. What am I to do?'

Algernon was suitably horrified. He remarked, with much reason, that it was no use telling Dodo and Jack, because they knew already.

At this moment the door of Lord Chesterford's study was closed quietly. He did not wish to hear any more just yet. But they neither of them noticed it.

He had overheard something which was not meant for his ears, related by a person who had overseen what she was not meant to see; he hated learning anything that was not his own affair, but he had learned it, and it turned out to be unpleasantly closely connected with him.

His first impulse was to think that Jack had behaved in a treacherous and blackguardly manner,

and this conclusion surprised him so much that he set to ponder over it. The more he thought of it, the more unlikely it appeared to him. Jack making love to his wife under cover of his own roof was too preposterous an idea to be entertained. He held a very high opinion of Jack, and it did not at all seem to fit in with this. Was there any other possibility? It came upon him with a sense of sickening probability that there was. He remembered the long loveless months; he remembered Dodo's indifference to him, then her neglect, then her dislike. Had Jack been hideously tempted and not been able to resist? Chesterford almost felt a friendly feeling for not being able to resist Dodo. What did all this imply? How long had it been going on? How did it begin? Where would it stop? He felt he had a right to ask these questions, and he meant to ask them of the proper person. But not yet. He would wait; he would see what happened. He was afraid of judging both too harshly. Maud's account might have been incorrect; anyhow it was not meant for him. His thoughts wandered on dismally

and vaguely. But the outcome was, that he said to himself, 'Poor Dodo, God forgive her.'

He had been so long used to the altered state of things that this blow seemed to him only a natural sequence. But he had been used to feed his starved heart with promises that Dodo would care for him again; that those months when they were first married were only the bud of a flower that would some day blossom. It was this feeble hope that what he had heard destroyed. If things had gone as far as that it was hopeless.

'Yes,' he repeated, 'it is all gone.'

If anything could have killed his love for Dodo he felt that it would have been this. But, as he sat there, he said to himself, 'She shall never know that I know of it.' That was his final determination. Dodo had wronged him cruelly; his only revenge was to continue as if she had been a faithful wife, for she would not let him love her.

Dodo should never know, she should not even suspect. He would go on behaving to her as before, as far as lay in his power. He would do

his utmost to make her contented, to make her less sorry—yes, less sorry—she married him.

Meanwhile Dodo and Jack were sitting before the fire in the smoking-room. He still retained Dodo's hand, and it lay unresistingly in his. Dodo was the first to speak.

'We must make the best of it, Jack,' she said; 'and you must help me. I cannot trust myself any longer. I used to be so sure of myself, so convinced that I could be happy. I blame myself for it, not him; but then, you see, I can't get rid of myself, and I can of him. Hence this plan. I have been a fool and a beast. And he, you know, he is the best of men. Poor, dear, old boy. It isn't his fault, but it isn't mine. I should like to know who profits by this absurd arrangement. Why can't I love him? Why can't I even like him? Why can't I help hating him? Yes, Jack, it has come to that. God knows there is no one more sorry than I am about it. But this is only a mood. I daresay in half an hour's time I shall only feel angry with him, and not sorry at all. I wonder if this match was made in heaven. Oh, I am miserable.'

Jack was really to be pitied more than Dodo. He knelt by her with her hand in his, feeling that he would have given his life without question to make her happy, but knowing that he had better give his life than do so. The struggle itself was over. He felt like a chain being pulled in opposite directions. He did not wrestle any longer; the two forces, he thought, were simply fighting it out over his rigid body. He wondered vaguely whether something would break, and, if so what? But he did not dream for a moment of ever reconsidering his answer to Dodo. The question did not even present itself. So he knelt by her, still holding her hand, and waiting for her to speak again.

'You mustn't desert me, Jack,' Dodo went on. 'It is easier for Chesterford, as well as for me, that you should be with us often, and I believe it is easier for you too. If I never saw you at all, I believe the crash would come. I should leave Chesterford, not to come to you, for that can't be, but simply to get away.'

'Ah, don't,' said Jack, 'don't go on talking about it like that. I can't do what you asked, you know that, simply because I love you and am Chester-

ford's friend. Think of your duty to him. Think, yes, think of our love for each other. Let it be something sacred, Dodo. Don't desecrate it. Help me not to desecrate it. Let it be our safeguard. It is better to have that, isn't it, than to think of going on living, as you must, without it? You said so yourself when you asked me to be with you often. To-night a deep joy has come into my life; let us keep it from disgrace. Ah, Dodo, thank God you love me.'

'Yes, Jack, I believe I do,' said Dodo. 'And you are right; I always knew I should rise to the occasion if it was put forcibly before me. I believe I have an ideal — which I have never had before—something to respect and to keep very clean. Fancy me with an ideal! Mother wouldn't know me again—there never was such a thing in the house.'

They were silent for a few minutes.

'But I must go to-morrow,' said Jack, 'as I settled to, by the disgusting early train. And the dressing-bell has sounded, and the ideal inexorably forbids us to be late for dinner, so I sha'n't see you alone again.'

He pressed her hand and she rose.

'Poor little ideal,' said Dodo. 'I suppose it would endanger its life if you stopped, wouldn't it, Jack? It must live to grow up. Poor little ideal, what a hell of a time it will have when you're gone. Poor dear.'

Dinner went off as usual. Dodo seemed to be in her ordinary spirits. Chesterford discussed parochial help with Mrs Vivian. He glanced at Dodo occasionally through the little grove of orchids that separated them, but Dodo did not seem to notice. She ate a remarkably good dinner, and talked nonsense to Mr Spencer who sat next her, and showed him how to construct a sea-sick passenger out of an orange, and smoked two cigarettes after the servants had left the room. Maud alone was ill at ease. She glanced apprehensively at Jack, as if she expected him to begin kissing Dodo's hand again, and, when he asked her casually where she had been since tea, she answered, 'In the smoking-room—I mean the drawing-room.' Jack merely raised his eyebrows, and remarked that he had been there himself, and did not remember seeing her.

In the drawing-room again Dodo was in the best spirits. She gave Mr Spencer lessons as to how to whistle on his fingers, and sang a French song in a brilliant and somewhat broad manner. The ladies soon retired, as there was a meet early on the following morning, and, after they had gone, Jack went up to the smoking-room, leaving Chesterford to finish a letter in his study. Shortly afterwards the latter heard the sound of wheels outside, and a footman entered to tell him the carriage was ready.

Chesterford was writing when the man entered, and did not look up.

'I did not order the carriage,' he said.

'Her ladyship ordered it for half-past ten,' said the man. 'She gave the order to me.'

Still Lord Chesterford did not look up, and sat silent so long that the man spoke again.

'Shall I tell her ladyship it is round?' he asked. 'I came to your lordship, as I understood her ladyship had gone upstairs.'

'You did quite right,' he said. 'There has been a mistake; it will not be wanted. Don't disturb Lady Chesterford, or mention it to her.'

'Very good, my lord.'

He turned to leave the room, when Lord Chesterford stopped him again. He spoke slowly.

'Did Lady Chesterford give you any other orders?'

'She told me to see that Mr Broxton's things were packed, my lord, as he would go away to-night. But she told me just before dinner that he wouldn't leave till the morning.'

'Thanks,' said Lord Chesterford. 'That's all I think. When is Mr Broxton leaving?'

'By the early train to-morrow, my lord.'

'Go up to the smoking-room and ask him to be so good as to come here a minute.'

The man left the room, and gave his message. Jack wondered a little, but went down.

Lord Chesterford was standing with his back to the fire. He looked up when Jack entered. He seemed to find some difficulty in speaking.

'Jack, old boy,' he said at last, 'you and I have been friends a long time, and you will not mind my being frank. Can you honestly say that you are still a friend of mine?'

Jack advanced towards him.

'I thank God that I can,' he said simply, and held out his hand.

He spoke without reflecting, for he did not know how much Chesterford knew. Of course, until this moment, he had not been aware that he knew anything. But Chesterford's tone convinced him. But a moment afterwards he saw that he had made a mistake, and he hastened to correct it.

'I spoke at random,' he said, 'though I swear that what I said was true. I do not know on what grounds you put the question to me.

Lord Chesterford did not seem to be attending.

'But it was true?' he asked.

Jack felt in a horrible mess. If he attempted to explain, it would necessitate letting Chesterford know the whole business. He chose between the two evils, for he would not betray Dodo.

'Yes, it is true,' he said.

Chesterford shook his hand.

'Forgive me for asking you, Jack,' he said. 'Then that's done with. But there is something more, something which is hard for me to say.' He paused, and Jack noticed that he was crum-

pling a piece of paper which he held in his hand into a tight hard ball. 'Then—then Dodo is tired of me?'

Jack felt helpless and sick. He could not trust himself to speak.

'Isn't it so?' asked Chesterford again.

Jack for reply held out both his hands without speaking. There was something horrible in the sight of this strong man standing pale and trembling before him. In a moment Chesterford turned away, and stood warming his hands at the fire.

'I heard something I wasn't meant to hear,' he said, 'and I know as much as I wish to. It doesn't much matter exactly what has happened. You have told me you are still my friend, and I thank you for it. And Dodo—Dodo is tired of me. I can reconstruct as much as is necessary. You are going off to-morrow, aren't you? I sha'n't see you again. Good-bye, Jack; try to forget I ever mistrusted you. I must ask you to leave me; I've got some things to think over.'

But Jack still lingered.

'Try to forgive Dodo,' he said; 'and forgive

me for saying so, but don't be hard on her. It will only make things worse.'

'Hard on her?' asked Chesterford. 'Poor Dodo, it is hard on her enough without that. She shall never know that I know, if I can help. I am not going to tell you what I know either. If you feel wronged that I even asked you that question, I am sorry for it, but I had grounds, and I am not a jealous man. The whole thing has been an awful mistake. I knew it in July, but I shall not make it worse by telling Dodo.'

Jack went out from his presence with a kind of awe. He did not care to know how Chesterford had found out, or how much. All other feelings were swallowed up in a vast pity for this poor man, whom no human aid could ever reach. The great fabric which his love had raised had been shattered hopelessly, and his love sat among its ruins and wept. It was all summed up in that short sentence, 'Dodo is tired of me,' and Jack knew that it was true. The whole business was hopeless. Dodo had betrayed him, and he knew it. He could no longer find a cold comfort in the thought that some day, if the difficult

places could be tided over, she might grow to love him again. That was past. And yet he had only one thought, and that was for Dodo. 'She shall never know I know it.' Truly there is something divine in those men we thought most human.

Jack went to his room and thought it all over. He was horribly vexed with himself for having exculpated himself, but the point of Chesterford's question was quite clear, and there was only one answer to it. Chesterford obviously did mean to ask whether he had been guilty of the great act of disloyalty which Dodo had proposed, and on the whole he would reconstruct the story in his mind more faithfully than if he had answered anything else, or had refused to answer. But Jack very much doubted whether Chesterford would reconstruct the story at all. The details had evidently no interest for him. All that mattered was expressed in that one sentence, 'Dodo is tired of me.' Jack would have given his right hand to have been able to answer 'No,' or to have been able to warn Dodo; but he saw that there was nothing to be done. The smash

had come, Chesterford had had a rude awakening. But his love was not dead, though it was stoned and beaten and outcast. With this in mind Jack took a sheet of paper from his writing-case, and wrote on it these words:—

'Do not desecrate it; let it help you to make an effort.'

He addressed it to Dodo, and when he went downstairs the next morning he slipped it among the letters that were waiting for her. The footman told him she had gone hunting.

'Is Lord Chesterford up yet?' said Jack.

'Yes, sir; he went hunting too with her ladyship,' replied the man.

CHAPTER XIV

DODO was called that morning at six, and she felt in very good spirits. There was something exhilarating in the thought of a good gallop again. There had been frost for a week before, and hunting had been stopped, but Dodo meant to make up all arrears. And, on the whole her interview with Jack had consoled her, and it had given her quite a new feeling of duty. Dodo always liked new things, at any rate till the varnish had rubbed off, and she quite realised that Jack was making a sacrifice to the same forbidding goddess.

'Well, I will make a sacrifice too,' she thought as she dressed, 'and when I die I shall be St Dodo. I don't think there ever was a saint Dodo before, or is it saintess? Anyhow I am going to be very good. Jack really is right; it

is the only thing to do. I should have felt horribly mean if I had gone off last night, and I daresay I should have had to go abroad, which would have been a nuisance. I wonder if Chesterford's coming. I shall make him, I think, and be very charming indeed. Westley, go and tap at the door of Lord Chesterford's room, and tell him he is coming hunting, and that I've ordered his horse, and send his man to him, and let us have breakfast at once for two instead of one.'

Dodo arranged her hat and stood contemplating her own figure at a cheval glass. It really did make a charming picture, and Dodo gave two little steps on one side, holding her skirt up in her left hand.

'Just look at that,
Just look at this,
I really think I'm not amiss,'

she hummed to herself. 'Hurrah for a gallop.'

She ran downstairs and made tea, and began breakfast. A moment afterwards she heard steps in the hall, and Chesterford entered. Dodo was not conscious of the least embarrassment, and determined to do her duty.

'Morning, old boy,' she said, 'you look as sleepy as a d. p. or dead pig. Look at my hat. I've got a new feather, which is the joy of my heart. Isn't it sweet? Have some tea, and give me another kidney—two, I think. What happens to the sheep after they take its kidneys out? Do you suppose it dies? I wonder if they put india-rubber kidneys in. Kidneys do come from sheep don't they? Or is there a kidney tree? Kidneys look like a sort of mushroom, and I suppose the bacon is the leaves, Kidnonia Baconiensis; now you're doing Latin, Chesterford, as you used to at Eton. I daresay you've forgotten what the Latin for kidneys is. I should like to have seen you at Eton, Chesterford. You must have been such a dear, chubby boy with blue eyes. You've got rather good eyes. I think I shall paint mine blue, and we shall have a nice little paragraph in the *Sportsman*. "Extraordinary example of conjugal devotion. The beautiful and fascinating Lady C. (you know I am beautiful and fascinating, that's why you married me), the wife of the charming and manly Lord C. (you know you are charming and manly, or I shouldn't have married you, and

where would you have been then? like Methusaleh when the candle went out), who live not a hundred miles from the ancient city of Harchester," etc. Now it's your turn to say something, I can't carry on a conversation alone. Besides, I've finished breakfast, and I shall sit by you and feed you. Don't take such large mouthfuls. That was nearly a whole kidney you put in then. You'll die of kidneys, and then people will think you had something wrong with your inside, but I shall put on your tombstone, "Because he ate them two at a time."'

Chesterford laughed. Dodo had not behaved like this for months. What did it all mean? But the events of the night before were too deeply branded on his memory to let him comfort himself very much. But anyhow it was charming to see Dodo like this again. And she shall never know.

'You'll choke if you laugh with five kidneys in your mouth,' Dodo went on. 'They'll get down into your lungs and bob about, and all your organs will get mixed up together and you won't be able to play on them. I suppose Americans

have American organs in their insides, which accounts for their squeaky voices. Now, have you finished? Oh, you really can't have any marmalade; put it in your pocket and eat it as you go along.'

Dodo was surprised at the ease with which she could talk nonsense again. She abused herself for ever having let it drop. It really was much better than yawning and being bored. She had no idea how entertaining she was to herself. And Chesterford had lost his hang-dog look. He put her hat straight for her, and gave her a little kiss just as he used to. After all, things were not so bad.

It was a perfect morning. They left the house about a quarter to seven, and the world was beginning to wake again. There was a slight hoar frost on the blades of grass that lined the road, and on the sprigs of bare hawthorn. In the east the sky was red with the coming day. Dodo sniffed the cool morning air with a sense of great satisfaction.

'Decidedly somebody washes the world every night,' she said, 'and those are the soapsuds which are still clinging to the grass. What nice clean

soap, all in little white crystals and spikes. And oh, how good it smells! Look at those poor little devils of birds looking for their breakfast. Poor dears, I suppose they'll be dead when the spring comes. There are the hounds. Come on, Chesterford, they're just going to draw the far cover. It is a sensible plan beginning hunting by seven. You get five hours by lunch-time.'

None of Dodo's worst enemies accused her of riding badly. She had a perfect seat, and that mysterious communication with her horse that seems nothing short of magical. 'If you tell your horse to do a thing the right way,' she used to say, 'he does it. It is inevitable. The question is "Who is master?" as Humpty Dumpty said. But it isn't only master; you must make him enjoy it. You must make him feel friendly as well, or else he'll go over the fence right enough, but buck you off on the other side as a kind of protest, and quite right too.'

Dodo had a most enjoyable day's hunting, and returned home well pleased with herself and everybody else. She found Jack's note waiting for her. She read it thoughtfully, and

said to herself, 'He is quite right, and that is what I mean to do. My young ideal, I am teaching you how to shoot.'

She took up a pen, meaning to write to him, but laid it down again. 'No,' she said, 'I can do without that at present. I will keep that for my bad days. I suppose the bad days will come, and I won't use my remedies before I get the disease.'

The days passed on. They went hunting every morning, and Dodo began to form very high hopes of her new child, as she called her ideal. The bad days did not seem to be the least imminent. Chesterford behaved almost like a lover again in the light of Dodo's new smiles. He kept his bad times to himself. They came in the evening usually when the others had gone to bed. He used to sit up late by himself over his study fire, thinking hopelessly of the day that had gone and the day that was to come. It was a constant struggle not to tell Dodo all he knew. He could scarcely believe that he had heard what Maud had said, or that he ever had had that interview with Jack. He could not

reconcile these things with Dodo's altered behaviour, and he gave it up. Dodo was tired of him, and he knew that he loved her more than ever. A more delicately-strung mind might almost have given way under the hourly struggle, but it is the fate of a healthy simple man to be capable of more continued suffering than one more highly developed. The latter breaks down, or he gets numbed with the pain; but Chesterford went on living under the slow ache, and his suffering grew no less. But through it all he looked back with deep gratitude to the chance that had sent Dodo in his way. He did not grow bitter, and realised in the midst of his suffering how happy he had been. He had only one strong wish. 'Oh, God,' he cried, 'give me her back for one moment! Let her be sorry just once for my sake.'

But there is a limit set to human misery, and the end had nearly come.

It was about a fortnight after Jack had gone. Maud and Mr Spencer had gone too, but Mrs Vivian was with them still. Dodo had more than once thought of telling her what had

happened, but she could not manage it. When Mrs Vivian had spoken of going, Dodo entreated her to stop, for she had a great fear of being left alone with Chesterford.

They had been out hunting, and Dodo had got home first. It was about three in the afternoon, and it had begun to snow. She had had lunch, and was sitting in the morning-room in a drowsy frame of mind. She was wondering whether Chesterford had returned, and whether he would come up and see her, and whether she was not too lazy to exert herself. She heard a carriage come slowly up the drive, and did not feel interested enough to look out of the window. She was sitting with her shoes off warming her feet at the fire, with a novel in her lap, which she was not reading, and a cigarette in her hand. She heard the opening and shutting of doors, and slow steps on the stairs. Then the door opened and Mrs Vivian came in.

Dodo had seen that look in her face once before, when she was riding in the Park with Jack, and a fearful certainty came upon her.

She got up and turned towards her.

'Is he dead?' she asked.

Mrs Vivian drew her back into her seat.

'I will tell you all,' she said. 'He has had a dangerous fall hunting, and it is very serious. The doctors are with him. There is some internal injury, and he is to have an operation. It is the only chance of saving his life, and even then it is a very slender one. He is quite conscious, and asked me to tell you. You will not be able to see him for half an hour. The operation is going on now.'

Dodo sat perfectly still. She did not speak a word; she scarcely even thought anything. Everything seemed to be a horrible blank to her.

'Ah God, ah God!' she burst out at last. 'Can't I do anything to help? I would give my right hand to help him. It is all too horrible. To think that I—' She walked up and down the room, and then suddenly opened the door and went downstairs. She paced up and down the drawing-room, paused a moment, and went into his study. His papers were lying about in confusion on the table, but on the top was a guide-book to the Riviera. Dodo remembered his buying this at

Mentone on their wedding-tour, and conscientiously walking about the town sight-seeing. She sat down in his chair and took it up. She remembered also that he had bought her that day a new volume of poems which had just come out, and had read to her out of it. There was in it a poem called 'Paris and Helen.' He had read that among others, and had said to her, as they were being rowed back to the yacht again that evening, 'That is you and I, Dodo, going home.'

On the fly-leaf of the guide-book he had written it out, and, as she sat there now, Dodo read it.

'As o'er the swelling tides we slip
That know not wave nor foam,
Behold the helmsman of our ship,
Love leads us safely home.

His ministers around us move
To aid the westering breeze,
He leads us softly home, my love,
Across the shining seas.

My golden Helen, day and night
Love's light is o'er us flung,
Each hour for us is infinite,
And all the world is young.

There is none else but thou and I
Beneath the heaven's high dome,
Love's ministers around us fly,
Love leads us safely home.'

Dodo buried her face in her hands with a low cry. 'I have been cruel and wicked,' she sobbed to herself. 'I have despised the best that any man could ever give me, and I can never make him amends. I will tell him all. I will ask him to forgive me. Oh, poor Chesterford, poor Chesterford.'

She sat there sobbing in complete misery. She saw, as she had never seen before, the greatness of his love for her, and her wretched, miserable return for his gift.

'It is all over; I know he will die,' she sobbed. 'Supposing he does not know me —supposing he dies before I can tell him. Oh, my husband, my husband, live to forgive me!'

She was roused by a touch on her shoulder. Mrs Vivian stood by her.

'You must be quick, Dodo,' she said. 'There is not much time.'

Dodo did not answer her, but went upstairs. Before the bedroom door she stopped.

'I must speak to him alone,' she said. 'Send them all out.'

'They have gone into the dressing-room,' said Mrs Vivian; 'he is alone.'

Dodo stayed no longer, but went in.

He was lying facing the door, and the shadow of death was on his face. But he recognised Dodo, and smiled and held out his hand.

Dodo ran to the bedside and knelt by it.

'Oh, Chesterford,' she sobbed, 'I have wronged you cruelly, and I can never make it up. I will tell you all.'

'There is no need,' said he; 'I knew it all along.'

Dodo raised her head.

'You knew it all?' she asked.

'Yes, dear,' he said. 'It was by accident that I knew it.'

'And you behaved to me as usual,' said Dodo.

'Yes, my darling,' said he; 'you wouldn't have had me beat you, would you? Don't speak of it—there is not much time.'

'Ah, forgive me, forgive me!' she cried. 'How could I have done it?'

'It was not a case of forgiving,' he said. 'You are you, you are Dodo. My darling, there is not time to say much. You have been very good to me, and have given me more happiness than I ever thought I could have had.'

'Chesterford! Chesterford!' cried Dodo pleadingly.

'Yes, darling,' he answered; 'my own wife. Dodo, I shall see the boy soon, and we will wait for you together. You will be mine again then. There shall be no more parting.'

Dodo could not answer him. She could only press his hand and kiss his lips, which were growing very white.

It was becoming a fearful effort for him to speak. The words came slowly with long pauses.

'There is one more thing,' he said. 'You must marry Jack. You must make him very happy—as you have made me.'

'Ah, don't say that,' said Dodo brokenly; 'don't cut me to the heart.'

'My darling,' he said, 'my sweet own wife,

I am so glad you told me. It has cleared up the only cloud. I wondered whether you would tell me. I prayed God you might, and He has granted it me. Good-bye, my own darling, good-bye.'

Dodo lay in his arms, and kissed him passionately.

'Good-bye, dear,' she sobbed.

He half raised himself in bed.

'Ah, my Dodo, my sweet wife,' he said.

Then he fell back and lay very still.

How long Dodo remained there she did not know. She remembered Mrs Vivian coming in and raising her gently, and they left the darkened room together.

CHAPTER XV.

PICTURE to yourself, or let me try to picture for you, a long, low, rambling house, covering a quite unnecessary area of ground, with many gables, tall, red-brick chimneys, unexpected corners, and little bow windows looking out from narrow turrets—a house that looks as if it had grown, rather than been designed and built. It began obviously with that little grey stone section, which seems to consist of small rooms with mullion windows, over which the ivy has asserted so supreme a dominion. The next occupant has been a man who knew how to make himself comfortable, but did not care in the least what sort of appearance his additions would wear to the world at large; to him we may assign that uncompromising straight wing which projects to the right of the little core of grey stone. Then

came a series of attempts to screen the puritanical ugliness of the offending block. Some one ran up two little turrets at one end, and a clock tower in the middle; one side of it was made the main entrance of the house, and two red-tiled lines of building were built at right angles to it to form a three-sided quadrangle, and the carriage drive was brought up in a wide sweep to the door, and a sun-dial was planted down in the grass plot in the middle, in such a way that the sun could only peep at it for an hour or two every day, owing to the line of building which sheltered it on every side except the north. So the old house went on growing, and got more incongruous and more delightful with every addition.

The garden has had to take care of itself under such circumstances, and if the house has been pushing it back in one place, it has wormed itself in at another, and queer little lawns with flower beds of old-fashioned, sweet-smelling plants have crept in where you least expect them. This particular garden has always seemed to me the ideal of what a garden should be. It is made to sit in,

to smoke in, to think in, to do nothing in. A wavy, irregular lawn forbids the possibility of tennis, or any game that implies exertion or skill, and it is the home of sweet smells, bright colour, and chuckling birds. There are long borders of mignonette, wallflowers and hollyhocks, and many old-fashioned flowers, which are going the way of all old fashions. London pride, with its delicate spirals and star-like blossoms, and the red drooping velvet of love-lies-a-bleeding. The thump of tennis balls, the flying horrors of ring-goal, even the clash of croquet is tabooed in this sacred spot. Down below, indeed, beyond that thick privet hedge, you may find, if you wish, a smooth, well-kept piece of grass, where, even now—if we may judge from white figures that cross the little square, where a swinging iron gate seems to remonstrate hastily and ill-temperedly with those who leave these reflective shades for the glare and publicity of tennis—a game seems to be in progress. If you had exploring tendencies in your nature, and had happened to find yourself, on the afternoon of which I propose to speak, in this delightful garden, you would sooner or later have wandered

into a low-lying grassy basin, shut in on three sides by banks of bushy rose-trees. The faint, delicate smell of their pale fragrance would have led you there, or, perhaps, the light trickling of a fountain, now nearly summer dry. Perhaps the exploring tendency would account for your discovery. There, lying back in a basket-chair, with a half-read letter in her hand, and an accusing tennis racquet by her side, you would have found Edith Staines. She had waited after lunch to get her letters, and going out, meaning to join the others, she had found something among them that interested her, and she was reading a certain letter through a second time when you broke in upon her. After a few minutes she folded it up, put it back in the envelope, and sat still, thinking. 'So she's going to marry him,' she said half aloud, and she took up her racquet and went down to the tennis courts.

Ten days ago she had come down to stay with Miss Grantham, at the end of the London season. Miss Grantham's father was a somewhat florid baronet of fifty years of age. He had six feet of height, a cheerful, high-coloured face, and a

moustache, which he was just conscious had military suggestions about it—though he had never been in the army—which was beginning to grow grey. His wife had been a lovely woman, half Spanish by birth, with that peculiarly crisp pronunciation that English people so seldom possess, and which is almost as charming to hear as a child's first conscious grasp of new words. She dressed remarkably well; her reading chiefly consisted of the *Morning Post*, French novels, and small books of morbid poetry, which seemed to her very *chic*, and she was worldly to the tips of her delicate fingers. She had no accomplishments of any sort, except a great knowledge of foreign languages. She argued, with much reason, that you could get other people to do your accomplishments for you. 'Why should I worry myself with playing scales?' she said. 'I can hire some poor wretch—she never could quite manage the English "r"—to play to me by the hour. He will play much better than I ever should, and it is a form of charity as well.'

Edith had made great friends with her, and disagreed with her on every topic under the sun.

Lady Grantham admired Edith's vivacity, though her own line was serene elegance, and respected her success. Success was the one accomplishment that she really looked up to (partly, perhaps, because she felt she had such a large measure of it herself), and no one could deny that Edith was successful. She had enough broadness of view to admire success in any line, and would have had a vague sense of satisfaction in accepting the arm of the best crossing-sweeper in London to take her in to dinner. She lived in a leonine atmosphere, and if you did not happen to meet a particular lion at her house, it was because 'he was here on Monday, or is coming on Wednesday;' at anyrate, not because he had not been asked.

Edith, however, felt thoroughly pleased with her quarters. She had hinted once that she had to go the day after to-morrow, but Nora Grantham had declined to argue the question. 'You're only going home to do your music,' she said. 'We've got quite as good a piano here as you have, and we leave you entirely to your own devices. Besides, you're mother's lion just now—isn't she, mother?—

and you're not going to get out of the menagerie just yet. There's going to be a big feeding-time next week, and you will have to roar.' Edith's remark about the necessity of going had been dictated only by a sense of duty, in order to give her hosts an opportunity of getting rid of her if they wished, and she was quite content to stop. She strolled down across the lawn to the tennis courts in a thoughtful frame of mind, and met Miss Grantham, who was coming to look for her.

'Where have you been, Edith?' she said. 'They're all clamouring for you. Mother is sitting in the summer-house wondering why anybody wants to play tennis. She says none of them will ever be as good as Cracklin, and he's a cad.'

'Grantie,' said Edith, 'Dodo's engaged.'

'Oh, dear, yes,' said Miss Grantham. 'I knew she would be. How delightful. Jack's got his reward at last. May I tell everyone? How funny that she should marry a Lord Chesterford twice. It was so convenient that the first one shouldn't have had any brothers, and Dodo won't have to change

her visiting cards, or have new handkerchiefs or anything. What a contrast, though!'

'No, it's private at present,' said Edith. 'Dodo has just written to me; she told me I might tell you. Do you altogether like it?'

'Of course I do,' said Miss Grantham. 'Only I should like to marry Jack myself. I wonder if he asked Dodo, or if Dodo asked him.'

'I suppose it was inevitable,' said Edith. 'Dodo says that Chesterford's last words to her were that she should marry Jack.'

'That was so sweet of him,' murmured Miss Grantham. 'He was very sweet and dear and remembering, wasn't he?'

Edith was still grave and doubtful.

'I'm sure there was nearly a crash,' she said. 'Do you remember the Brettons' ball? Chesterford didn't like that, and they quarrelled, I know, next morning.'

'Oh, *how* interesting,' said Miss Grantham. 'But Dodo was quite right to go, I think. She was dreadfully bored, and she will not stand being bored. She might have done something much worse.'

'It seems to be imperatively necessary for Dodo to do something unexpected,' said Edith. 'I wonder, oh, I wonder—Jack will be very happy for a time,' she added inconsequently.

Edith's coming was the signal for serious play to begin. She entirely declined to play except with people who considered it, for the time being, the most important thing in the world, and naturally she played well.

A young man, of military appearance on a small scale was sitting by Lady Grantham in the tent, and entertaining her with somewhat unfledged remarks.

'Miss Staines does play so arfly well, doesn't she?' he was saying. 'Look at that stroke, perfectly rippin', you know, what?'

Mr Featherstone had a habit of finishing all his sentences with 'what?' He pronounced it to rhyme with heart.

Lady Grantham was reading Loti's book of pity and death. It answered the double purpose of being French and morbid.

'What book have you got hold of there?' continued Featherstone. 'It's an arful bore reading

books, dontcherthink, what? I wish one could get a feller to read them for me, and then tell one about them.'

'I rather enjoy some books,' said Lady Grantham. 'This, for instance, is a good one,' and she held the book towards him.

'Oh, that's French, isn't it?' remarked Featherstone. 'I did French at school; don't know a word now. It's an arful bore having to learn French, isn't it? Couldn't I get a feller to learn it for me?

Lady Grantham reflected.

'I daresay you could,' she replied. 'You might get your man,—tiger—how do you call him?—to learn it. It's capable of comprehension to the lowest intellect,' she added crisply.

'Oh, come, Lady Grantham,' he replied, 'you don't think so badly of me as that, do you?'

Lady Grantham was seized with a momentary desire to run her parasol through his body, provided it could be done languidly and without effort. Her daughter had come up, and sat down in a low chair by her. Featherstone was

devoting the whole of his great mind to the end of his moustache.

'Nora,' she said quietly, 'this little man must be taken away. I can't quite manage him. Tell him to go and play about.'

'Dear mother,' she replied, 'bear him a little longer. He can't play about by himself.'

Lady Grantham got gently up from her chair, and thrust an exquisite little silver paper-knife between the leaves of her book.

'I think I will ask you to take my chair across to that tree opposite,' she said to him, without looking at him.

He followed her, dragging the chair after him. Halfway across the lawn they met a footman bringing tea down into the ground.

'Take the chair,' she said. Then she turned to her little man. 'Many thanks. I won't detain you,' she said, with a sweet smile. 'So good of you to have come here this afternoon.'

Featherstone was impenetrable. He lounged back, if so small a thing can be said to lounge, and sat down again by Miss Grantham.

'Fascinatin' woman your mother is,' he said.

'Arfly clever, isn't she? What? Knows French and that sort of thing. I can always get along all right in France. If you only swear at the waiters they understand what you want all right, you know.'

Two or three other fresh arrivals made it possible for another set to be started, and Mr Featherstone was induced to play, in spite of his protestations that he had quite given up tennis for polo. Lady Grantham finished her Loti, and moved back to the tea-table, where Edith was sitting, fanning herself with a cabbage leaf, and receiving homage on the score of her tennis-playing. Lady Grantham did not offer to give anybody any tea; she supposed they would take it when they wanted it, but she wished someone would give her a cup.

'What's the name of the little man and his moustache?' she asked Edith, indicating Mr Featherstone, who was performing wild antics in the next court.

Edith informed her.

'How did he get here?' demanded Lady Grantham.

'Oh, he's a friend of mine. I think he came to

see me,' replied Edith. 'He lives somewhere about. I suppose you find him rather trying. It doesn't matter; he's of no consequence.'

'My dear Edith, between your sporting curate, and your German conductor, and your Roman Catholic curé, and this man, one's life isn't safe.'

'You won't see the good side of those sort of people,' said Edith. 'If they've got rather overwhelming manners, and aren't as silent and bored as you think young men ought to be, you think they're utter outsiders.'

'I only want to know if there are any more of that sort going to turn up. Think of the positions you put me in! When I went into the drawing-room yesterday, for instance, before lunch, I find a Roman Catholic priest there, who puts up two fingers at me, and says "Benedicite."'

Edith lay back in her chair and laughed.

'How I should like to have seen you! Did you think he was saying grace, or did you tell him not to be insolent?'

'I behaved with admirable moderation,' said Lady Grantham. 'I even prepared to be nice to him. But he had sudden misgivings, and said, "I

beg your pardon, I thought you were Miss Staines." I saw I was not wanted, and retreated. That is not all. Bob told me that I had to take a curate in to dinner last night, and asked me not to frighten him. I suppose he thought I wanted to say "Bo," or howl at him. The curate tried me. I sat down when we got to the table, and he turned to me and said, "I beg your pardon"—they all beg my pardon—"but I am going to say grace." Then I prepared myself to talk night schools and district visiting; but he turned on me, and asked me what I thought of Orme's chances for the St Leger.'

'Oh, dear! oh, dear!' cried Edith; 'he told me afterwards that you seemed a very serious lady.'

'I didn't intend to encourage that,' continued Lady Grantham; 'so I held on to district visiting. We shook our heads together over dissent in Wales. We split over Calvinism—who was Calvin? We renounced society; and I was going to work him a pair of slippers. We were very edifying. Then he sang comic songs in the drawing-room, and discussed the methods of cheating at baccarat. I was a dead failure.'

'Anyhow, you're a serious lady,' said Edith.

'That young man will come to a bad end,' said Lady Grantham; 'so will your German conductor. He ordered beer in the middle of the morning, to-day — the second footman will certainly give notice—and he smoked a little clay pipe after dinner in the dining-room. Then this afternoon comes this other friend of yours. He says, "Arfly rippin' what."'

'He said you were arfly fascinatin' what,' interpolated Miss Grantham, 'when you went away to read your book. You were very rude to him.'

Sir Robert Grantham had joined the party. He was a great hand at adapting his conversation to his audience, and making everyone conscious that they ought to feel quite at home. He recounted at some length a series of tennis matches which he had taken part in a few years ago. A strained elbow had spoiled his chances of winning, but the games were most exciting, and it was generally agreed at the time that the form of the players was quite first-class. He talked about Wagner and counterpoint to Edith. He asked his vicar abstruse questions on the evidence of the immor-

tality of the soul after death; he discussed agriculture and farming with tenants, to whom he always said 'thank ye,' instead of 'thank you,' in order that they might feel quite at their ease; he lamented the want of physique in the English army to Mr Featherstone, who was very short, and declared that the average height of Englishmen was only five feet four. As he said this he drew himself up, and made it quite obvious that he himself was six feet high, and broad in proportion.

A few more cups of tea were drunk, and a few more sets played, and the party dispersed. Edith was the only guest in the house, and she and Frank, the Oxford son, stopped behind to play a game or two more before dinner. Lady Grantham and Nora strolled up through the garden towards the house, while Sir Robert remained on the ground, and mingled advice, criticism, and approbation to the tennis players. Frank's back-hand stroke, he thought, was not as good as it might be, and Edith could certainly put half fifteen on to her game if judiciously coached. Neither of the players volleyed as well as himself, but volley-

ing was his strong point, and they must not be discouraged. Frank's attitude to his father was that of undisguised amusement; but he found him very entertaining.

They were all rather late for dinner, and Lady Grantham was waiting for them in the drawing-room. Frank and his father were down before Edith, and Lady Grantham was making remarks on their personal appearance.

'You look very hot and red,' she was saying to her son 'and I really wish you would brush your hair better. I don't know what young men are coming to, they seem to think that everything is to be kept waiting for them.'

Frank's attitude was one of serene indifference.

'Go on, go on,' he said; 'I don't mind.'

Edith was five minutes later. Lady Grantham remarked on the importance of being in time for dinner, and hoped they wouldn't all die from going to bed too soon afterwards. Frank apologised for his mother.

'Don't mind her, Miss Staines,' he said, 'they're only her foreign manners. She doesn't know how to behave. It's all right. I'm going to

take you in, mother. Are we going to have grouse?'

That evening Miss Grantham and Edith 'talked Dodo,' as the latter called it, till the small hours.

She produced Dodo's letter, and read extracts.

'Of course we sha'n't be married till after next November,' wrote Dodo. 'Jack wouldn't hear of it, and it would seem very unfeeling. Don't you think so? It will be odd going back to Winston again. Mind you come and stay with us at Easter.'

'I wonder if Dodo ever thinks with regret of anything or anybody,' said Edith. 'Imagine writing like that—asking me if I shouldn't think it unfeeling.'

'Oh, but she says she would think it unfeeling,' said Miss Grantham. 'That's so sweet and remembering of her.'

'But don't you see,' said Edith, 'she evidently thinks it is so good of her to have feelings about it at all. She might as well call attention to the fact that she always puts her shoes and stockings on to go to church.'

'There's lots of women who would marry again before a year was out if it wasn't for convention,' said Miss Grantham.

'That's probably the case with Dodo,' remarked Edith. 'Dodo doesn't care one pin for the memory of that man. She knows it, and she knows I know it. Why does she say that sort of thing to me? He was a good man, too, and I'm not sure that he wasn't great. Chesterford detested me, but I recognised him.'

'Oh, I don't think he was great,' said Miss Grantham. 'Didn't he always strike you as a little stupid?'

'I prefer stupid people,' declared Edith roundly. 'They are so restful. They're like nice, sweet, white bread; they quench your hunger as well as *pâté de foi gras*, and they are much better for you.'

'I think they make you just a little thirsty,' remarked Miss Grantham. 'I should have said they were more like cracknels. Besides, do you think that it's an advantage to associate with people who are good for you? It produces a sort of rabbia in me. I want to bite them.'

'You like making yourself out worse than you are, Grantie,' said Edith.

'I think you like making Dodo out worse than she is,' returned Nora. 'I always used to think you were very fond of her.'

'I am fond of her,' said Edith; 'that's why I'm dissatisfied with her.'

'What a curious way of showing your affection,' said Miss Grantham. 'I love Dodo, and if I was a man I should like to marry her.'

'Dodo is too dramatic,' said Edith. 'She never gets off the stage; and sometimes she plays to the gallery, and then the stalls say, "How cheap she's making herself." She has the elements of a low comedian about her.'

'And the airs of a tragedy queen, I suppose,' added Miss Grantham.

'Exactly,' said Edith; 'and the consequence is that she is a burlesque sometimes. She is her own parody.'

'Darling Dodo,' said Grantie, with feeling. 'I *do* want to see her again.'

'All her conduct after his death,' continued Edith, 'that was the tragedy queen; she shut herself up in that great house, quite alone, for two months, and went to church with a large prayer-

book every morning at eight. But it was burlesque all the same. Dodo isn't sorry like that. The gallery yelled with applause.'

'I thought it was so sweet of her,' murmured Grantie. 'I suppose I'm gallery too.'

'Then she went abroad,' continued Edith, 'and sat down and wept by the waters of Aix. But she soon took down her harp. She gave banjo parties on the lake, and sang coster songs.'

'Mrs Vane told me she recovered her spirits wonderfully at Aix,' remarked Miss Grantham.

'And played baccarat, and recovered other people's money,' pursued Edith. 'If she'd taken the first train for Aix after the funeral, I should have respected her.'

'Oh, that would have been horrid,' said Miss Grantham; 'besides, it wouldn't have been the season.'

'That's true,' said Edith. 'Dodo probably remembered that.'

'Oh, you sha'n't abuse Dodo any more,' said Miss Grantham. 'I think it's perfectly horrid of you. Go and play me something.'

Perhaps the thought of Chesterford was in Edith's mind as she sat down to the piano, for she played a piece of Mozart's 'Requiem,' which is the saddest music in the world.

Miss Grantham shivered a little. The long wailing notes struck some chord within her, which disturbed her peace of mind.

'What a dismal thing,' she said, when Edith had finished. 'You make me feel like Sunday evening after a country church.'

Edith stood looking out of the window. The moon was up, and the great stars were wheeling in their courses through the infinite vault. A nightingale was singing loud in the trees, and the little mysterious noises of night stole about among the bushes. As Edith thought of Chesterford she remembered how the Greeks mistook the passionate song of the bird for the lament of the dead, and it did not seem strange to her. For love sometimes goes hand-in-hand with death.

She turned back into the room again.

'God forgive her,' she said, 'if we cannot.'

'I'm not going to bed with that requiem in

my ears,' said Miss Grantham. 'I should dream of hearses.'

Edith went to the piano, and broke into a quick, rippling movement.

Miss Grantham listened, and felt she ought to know what it was.

'What is it?' she said, when Edith had finished.

'It is the scherzo from the "Dodo Symphony,"' she said. 'I composed it two years ago at Winston.'

CHAPTER XVI.

DODO had written to Edith from Zermatt, where she was enjoying herself amazingly. Mrs Vane was there, and Mr and Mrs Algernon Spencer, and Prince Waldenech and Jack. As there would have been some natural confusion in the hotel if Dodo had called herself Lady Chesterford, when Lord Chesterford was also there, she settled to be called Miss Vane. This tickled Prince Waldenech enormously; it seemed to him a capital joke.

Dodo was sitting in the verandah of the hotel one afternoon, drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes. Half the hotel were scandalised at her, and usually referred to her as 'that Miss Vane'; the other half adored her, and went expeditions with her, and took minor parts in her theatricals, and generally played universal second fiddle.

Dodo enjoyed this sort of life. There was in her an undeveloped germ of simplicity, that found pleasure in watching the slow-footed cows driven home from the pastures, in sitting with Jack—regardless of her assumed name — in the crocus-studded meadows, or by the side of the swirling glacier-fed stream that makes the valley melodious. She argued, with great reason, that she had already shocked all the people that were going to be shocked so much that it didn't matter what she did; while the other contingent, who were not going to be shocked, were not going to be shocked. 'Everyone must either be shocked or not shocked,' she said, 'and they're that already. That's why Prince Waldenech and I are going for a moonlight walk next week when the moon comes back.'

Dodo had made great friends with the Prince's half-sister, a Russian on her mother's side, and she was reading her extracts out of her unwritten book of the *Philosophy of Life*, an interesting work, which varied considerably according to Dodo's mood. Just now it suited Dodo to be in love with life.

'You are a Russian by nature and sympathy, my dear Princess,' she was saying, 'and you are therefore in a continual state of complete boredom. You think you are bored here, because it is not Paris; in Paris you are quite as much bored with all your *fêtes*, and dances, and parties as you are here. I tell you frankly you are wrong. Why don't you come and sit in the grass, and look at the crocuses, and throw stones into the stream like me?'

The Princess stretched out a delicate arm.

'I don't think I ever threw a stone in my life,' she said dubiously. 'Would it amuse me, do you think?'

'Not at first,' said Dodo; 'and you will never be amused at all if you think about it.'

'What am I to think about then?' she asked.

'You must think about the stone,' said Dodo decisively, 'you must think about the crocuses, you must think about the cows.'

'It's all so new to me,' remarked the Princess. 'We never think about cows in Russia.'

'That's just what I'm saying,' said Dodo. 'You must get out of yourself. Anything does to think

about, and nobody is bored unless they think about being bored. When one has the whole world to choose from, and only one subject in it that can make one feel bored, it really shows a want of resource to think about that. Then you ought to take walks and make yourself tired.'

The Princess cast a vague eye on the Matterhorn.

'That sort of horror?' she asked.

'No, you needn't begin with the Matterhorn,' said Dodo, laughing. 'Go to the glaciers, and get rather cold and wet. Boredom is chiefly physical.'

'I'm sure being cold and wet would bore me frightfully,' she said.

'No, no—a big no,' cried Dodo. 'No one is ever bored unless they are comfortable. That's the great principle. There isn't time for it. You cannot be bored and something else at the same time. Being comfortable doesn't count; that's our normal condition. But you needn't be uncomfortable in order to be bored. It's very comfortable sitting here with you, and I'm not the least bored.

I should poison myself if I were bored. I can't think why you don't.'

'I will do anything you recommend,' said the Princess placidly. 'You are the only woman I know who never appears to be bored. I wonder if my husband would bore you. He is very big, and very good, and he eats a large breakfast, and looks after his serfs. He bores me to extinction. He would wear black for ten years if I poisoned myself.'

A shade of something passed over Dodo's face. It might have been regret, or stifled remembrance, or a sudden twinge of pain, and it lasted an appreciable fraction of a second.

'I can imagine being bored with that kind of man,' she said in a moment.

The Princess was lying back in her chair, and did not notice a curious hardness in Dodo's voice.

'I should so like to introduce you to him,' said she. 'I should like to shut you up with him for a month at our place on the Volga. It snows a good deal there, and he goes out in the snow and shoots animals, and comes back in the evening with a red face, and tells me all about it.

It is very entertaining, but a trifle monotonous. He does not know English, nor German, nor French. He laughs very loud. He is devoted to me. Do go and stay with him. I think I'll join you when you've been there three weeks. He is quite safe. I shall not be afraid. He writes to me every day, and suggests that he should join me here.'

Dodo shifted her position and looked up at the Matterhorn.

'Yes,' she said, 'I should certainly be bored with him, but I'm not sure that I would show it.'

'He wouldn't like you at all,' continued the Princess. 'He would think you loud. That is so odd. He thinks it unfeminine to smoke. He has great ideas about the position of women. He gave me a book of private devotions bound in the parchment from a bear he had shot on my last birthday.'

Dodo laughed.

'I'm sure you needn't be bored with him,' she said. 'He must have a strong vein of unconscious humour about him.'

'I'm quite unconscious of it,' said the Princess.

'You cannot form the slightest idea of what he's like till you see him. I almost feel inclined to tell him to come here.'

'Ah, but you Russian women have such liberty,' said Dodo. 'You can tell your husband not to expect to see you again for three months. We can't do that. An English husband and wife are like two Siamese twins. Until about ten years ago they used to enter the drawing-room, when they were going out to dinner, arm-in-arm.'

'That's very bourgeois, said the Princess. 'You are rather a bourgeois race. You are very hearty, and pleased to see one, and all that. There's Lord Chesterford. You're a great friend of his, aren't you? He looks very distinguished. I should think he was usually bored.'

'He was my husban s first cousin,' said Dodo. Princess Alexandrina ot course knew that Miss Vane was a widow. I was always an old friend of his, as long as I can remember, that's to say. Jack and I are go ng up towards the Riffel to watch the sunset. Come with us.'

'I think I'll see the sunset from here,' she said 'You're going up a hill, I suppose?'

'Oh, but you can't see it from here,' said Dodo. 'That great mass of mountain is in the way.'

The Princess considered.

'I don't think I want to see the sunset after all,' she said. 'I've just found the *Kreutzer Sonata.* I've been rural enough for one day, and I want a breath of civilised air. Do you know, I never feel bored when you are talking to me.'

'Oh, that's part of my charm, isn't it?' said Dodo to Jack, who had lounged up to where they were sitting.

'Dodo's been lecturing me, Lord Chesterford,' said the Princess. 'Does she ever lecture you?'

'She gave me quite a long lecture once,' said he. 'She recommended me to live in a cathedral town.'

'A cathedral town,' said the Princess. 'That's something fearful, isn't it? Why did you tell him to do that?' she asked.

'I think it was a mistake,' said Dodo. 'Anyhow, Jack didn't take my advice. I shouldn't recommend him to do it now, but he has a perfect genius for being domestic. Everyone is very domestic in cathedral towns. They all dine at

seven and breakfast at a quarter past eight—next morning, you understand. That quarter past is delightful. But Jack said he didn't want to score small successes,' she added, employing a figure grammatically known as 'hiatus.'

'My husband is very domestic,' said the Princess, 'and he isn't a bit like Lord Chesterford. He would like to live with me in a little house in the country, and never have anyone to stay with us. That would be so cheerful during the winter months.'

'Jack, would you like to live with your wife in a little house in the country?' demanded Dodo.

'I don't think I should ever marry a woman who wanted to,' remarked Jack, meeting Dodo's glance.

'Imagine two people really liking each other better than all the rest of the world,' said the Princess, 'and living on milk, and love, and wild roses, and fresh eggs! I can't bear fresh eggs.'

'My egg this morning wasn't at all fresh,' said Dodo. 'I wish I'd thought of sending it to your room.'

'Would you never get tired of your wife, don't

you think,' continued the Princess, 'if you shut yourselves up in the country? Supposing she wished to pick roses when you wanted to play lawn tennis?'

'Oh, Jack, it wouldn't do,' said Dodo. 'You'd make her play lawn tennis.'

'My husband and I never thought of playing lawn tennis,' said the Princess. 'I shall try that when we meet next. It's very amusing, isn't it?'

'It makes you die of laughing,' said Dodo, solemnly. 'Come, Jack, we're going to see the sunset. Good-bye, dear. Go and play with your maid. She can go out of the room while you think of something, and then come in and guess what you've thought of.'

Jack and Dodo strolled up through the sweet-smelling meadows towards the Riffelberg. A cool breeze was streaming down from the 'furrow cloven alls' of the glacier, heavy with the clean smell of pine woods and summer flowers, and thick with a hundred mingling sounds. The cows were being driven homewards, and the faint sounds of bells were carried down to them from the green

heights above. Now and then they passed a herd of goats, still nibbling anxiously at the wayside grass, followed by some small ragged shepherd boy, who brushed his long hair away from his eyes to get a better look at this dazzling, fair-skinned woman, who evidently belonged to quite another order of beings from his wrinkled, early-old mother. One of them held out to Dodo a wilted little bunch of flowers, crumpled with much handling, but she did not seem to notice him. After they had passed he tossed them away, and ran off after his straying flock. Southwards, high above them, stretched the long lines of snow spread out under the feet of the Matterhorn, which sat like some huge sphinx, unapproachable, remote. Just below lay the village, sleeping in the last rays of the sun, which shone warmly on the red, weathered planks. Light blue smoke curled slowly up from the shingled roofs, and streamed gently down the valley in a thin, transparent haze.

'Decidedly it's a very nice world,' said Dodo. 'I'm so glad I wasn't born a Russian. The Princess never enjoys anything at all, except telling one how bored she is. But she's very

amusing, and I gave her a great deal of good advice.'

'What have you been telling her to do?' asked Jack.

'Oh, anything. I recommended her to sit in the meadows, and throw stones and get her feet wet. It's not affectation at all in her, she really is hopelessly bored. It's as easy for her to be bored as for me not to be. Jack, what will you do to me if I get bored when we're married?'

'I shall tell you to throw stones,' said he.

'As long as you don't look at me reproachfully,' said Dodo, 'I sha'n't mind. Oh, look at the Matterhorn. Isn't it big?'

'I don't like it,' said Jack; 'it always looks as if it was taking notice, and reflecting how dreadfully small one is.'

'I used to think Vivy was like that,' said Dodo. 'She was very good to me once or twice. I wonder what I shall be like when I'm middle-aged. I can't bear the thought of getting old, but that won't stop it. I don't want to sit by the fire and purr. I don't think I could do it.'

'One won't get old all of a sudden though,' said

Jack; 'that's a great consideration. The change will come so gradually that one won't know it.'

'Ah, don't,' said Dodo quickly. 'It's like dying by inches, losing hold of life gradually. It won't come to me like that. I shall wake up some morning and find I'm not young any more.'

'Well, it won't come yet,' said Jack with sympathy.

'Well, I'm not going to bother my head about it,' said Dodo, 'there isn't time. There's Maud and her little Spencer. He's a dear little man, and he ought to be put in a band-box with some pink cotton-wool, and taken out every Sunday morning.'

Dodo whistled shrilly on her fingers to attract their attention.

Mr Spencer had been gathering flowers and putting them into a neat, little, tin box, which he slung over his shoulders. He was dressed in a Norfolk jacket carefully buttoned round his waist, with knickerbockers and blue worsted stockings. He wore a small blue ribbon in his top buttonhole, and a soft felt hat. He carried his flowers home in the evening, and always remembered to

press them before he went to bed. He and Maud were sitting on a large grey rock by the wayside, reading the Psalms for the seventeenth evening of the month.

Dodo surveyed her critically, and laid herself out to be agreeable.

'Well, Algy,' she said, 'how are the flowers going on? Oh, what a sweet little gentian. Where did you get it? We're going to have some theatricals this evening, and you must come. It's going to be a charade, and you'll have to guess the word afterwards. Jack and I are going to look at the sunset. We shall be late for dinner. What's that book, Maud?'

'We were reading the Psalms for the evening,' said Maud.

'Oh, how dear of you,' said Dodo. 'What a lovely church this makes. Algy, why don't you have service out of doors at Gloucester? I always feel so much more devotional on fine evenings out in the open air. I think that's charming. Good-bye. Jack and I must go on.'

Dodo was a good walker, and they were soon among the pines that climb up the long steep

slope to the Riffel. Their steps were silent on the carpet of needles, and they walked on, not talking much, but each intensely conscious of the presence of the other. At a corner high up on the slope they stopped, for the great range in front of them had risen above the hills on the other side of the valley, and all the snow was flushed with the sunset.

Dodo laid her hand on Jack's.

'How odd it is that you and I should be here together, and like this,' she said. 'I often used to wonder years ago whether this would happen. Jack, you will make me very happy? Promise me that.'

And Jack promised.

'I often think of Chesterford,' Dodo went on. 'He wished for this, you know. He told me so as he was dying. Did you ever know, Jack—' even Dodo found it hard to get on at this moment —'did you ever know—he knew all? I began to tell him, and he stopped me, saying he knew.'

Jack's face was grave.

'He told me he knew,' he said; 'at least, I saw he did. I never felt so much ashamed. It was

my fault. I would have given a great deal to save him that knowledge.'

'God forgive me if I was cruel to him,' said Dodo. 'But, oh, Jack, I did try. I was mad that night I think.'

'Don't talk of it,' said he suddenly; 'it was horrible; it was shameful.'

They were silent a moment. Then Jack said,—

'Dodo, let us bury the thought of that for ever. There are some memories which are sacred to me. The memory of Chesterford is one. He was very faithful, and he was very unhappy. I feel as if I was striking his dead body when you speak of it. Requiescat.'

They rose and went down to the hotel; the sun had set, and it grew suddenly cold.

The theatricals that night were a great success. Dodo was simply inimitable. Two maiden ladies left the hotel the next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

DODO'S marriage was announced in September. It was to be celebrated at the beginning of December, and was to be very grand indeed. Duchesses were expected to be nothing accounted of. She was still in Switzerland when it was made known, and events had developed themselves. The announcement came out in the following manner. She had taken her moonlight walk, but not with Prince Waldenech. She had mentioned to him incidentally that Jack was coming as well, and after dinner the Prince found he had important despatches waiting for him. Dodo was rather amused at the inadequacy of this statement, as no post had come in that morning. The thought that the Prince particularly wished to take a romantic walk with her was entertaining. Next morning, however, while Dodo

was sitting in her room, looking out over the wide, green valley, her maid came in and asked if Prince Waldenech might have permission to speak to her.

'Good morning,' said Dodo affably, as he entered. 'I wish you had been with us last night. We had a charming walk, but Jack was dreadfully dull. Why didn't you come?'

The Prince twisted his long moustaches.

'Certainly I had no despatches,' he declared with frankness; 'that was—how do you call it—oh, a white lie.'

'Did you expect me to believe it?' asked Dodo.

'Assuredly not,' he returned. 'It would have been an insult to your understanding. But such statements are better than the truth sometimes. But I came here for another purpose — to say good-bye.'

'You're not going?' said Dodo surprisedly.

'Unless you tell me to stop,' he murmured, advancing to her.

Dodo read his meaning at once, and determined to stop his saying anything more.

'Certainly I tell you to stop,' she said. 'You

mustn't break up our charming party so soon. Besides, I have a piece of news for you this morning. I ask for your congratulations.'

'Ah, those despatches,' murmured the Prince.

'No, it was not the fault of your despatches,' said Dodo, laughing. 'It was settled some time ago. I shall be Lady Chesterford again next year. Allow me to introduce the Marchiones of Chesterford elect to your Highness,' and she swept him a little curtsey.

The Prince bowed.

'The Marquis of Chesterford is a very fortunate man,' he said. 'Decidedly I had better go away to-morrow.'

Dodo felt annoyed with him. 'I thought he was clever enough not to say that,' she thought to herself.

'No, my dear Prince, you shall do nothing of the sort,' she said. 'You are very happy here, and I don't choose that you should go away—I tel you to stop. You said you would if I told you.'

'I am a man of honour still,' said he, with mock solemnity. He put both hands together

and bowed. 'I shall be the first to congratulate the Marquis,' he said, 'and may I hope the Marchioness will think with pity on those less fortunate than he.'

Dodo smiled benignantly. He really had got exquisite manners. The scene was artistic, and it pleased her.

'I should think you were too proud to accept pity,' she said.

'Have you ever seen me other than humble—to you?' he asked.

'Take it then,' said Dodo; 'as much as your case requires. But I feel it is insolent of me to offer it.'

'I take all the pity you have,' said he, smiling gravely. 'I want it more than any other poor devil you might think of bestowing it on.'

He bowed himself gracefully out of the room. He and Dodo had been discussing English proverbs the day before, and Dodo asserted broadly that they were all founded on universal truths. The Prince thought that pity was quite a promising gift.

Dodo was a little uneasy after he had gone.

She was always a trifle afraid of him, though, to do her justice, no one would have guessed it. He had acted the rejected lover in the theatricals of the week before, and his acting had been rather too good. The scene she had just gone through reminded her very forcibly of it. She had found that she could not get the play out of her head afterwards, and had had long waking dreams that night, in which the Prince appeared time after time, and her refusal got more faint as he pressed his suit. She felt that he was the stronger of the two, and such a scene as the last inspired her with a kind of self-distrust. 'He will not make himself "cheap,"' Dodo said to herself. She was very glad he was going to stop, and had been surprised to feel how annoyed she was when he said he had come to wish good-bye. But she felt he had a certain power over her, and did not quite like it. She would take Jack out for a walk and make things even. Jack had no power over her, and she thought complacently how she could turn him round her little finger. Dear old Jack! What a good time they were going to have.

She went downstairs and met the Prince and Jack on the verandah. The former was murmuring congratulatory speeches, and Jack was saying 'Thanks awfully' at intervals. He had once said to Dodo that the Prince was 'an oily devil,' which was putting it rather strongly. Dodo had stuck up for him. 'You only say he's oily,' she said, 'because he's got much better manners than you, and can come into the room without looking ridiculous, and I rather like devils as a rule, and him in particular, though I don't say he is one. Anyhow he is a friend of mine, and you can talk about something else.'

Jack followed Dodo into the square, and sat down by her.

'What made you tell that chap that we were engaged?' he asked.

'Oh, I had excellent reasons,' said Dodo.

The memory of the interview was still rather strong in her mind, and she felt not quite sure of herself.'

'No doubt,' said Jack; 'but I wish you'd tell me what they were.'

'Don't talk as if you were the inquisition, old

boy,' she said. 'I don't see why I should tell you if I don't like.'

'Please yourself,' said Jack crossly, and got up to walk away.

'Jack, behave this minute,' said Dodo. 'Apologise instantly for speaking like that.'

'I beg its little pardon,' said Jack contentedly.

He liked being hauled over the coals by Dodo.

'That's right; now, if you'll be good, I'll tell you. Has he gone quite away?'

'Quite; thank goodness,' said Jack.

'Well,' said Dodo, 'I told him because he was just going to propose to me himself, and I wanted to stop him.'

'Nasty brute,' said Jack. 'I hope you gave it him hot.'

'That's a very rude thing to say, Jack,' said she. 'It argues excellent taste in him. Besides, you did it yourself. Nasty brute!'

'What right has he got to propose to you, I should like to know?' asked Jack.

'Just as much as you had.'

'Then I ought to be kicked for doing it.'

Dodo applied the toe of a muddy shoe to Jack's calf.

'Now, I've dirtied your pretty stockings,' she said. 'Serves you right for proposing to me. How dare you, you nasty brute!'

Jack made a grab at her foot, and made his fingers dirty.

'Jack, behave,' said Dodo; 'there are two thousand people looking.'

'Let them look,' said Jack recklessly. 'I'm not going to be kicked in broad daylight within shouting distance of the hotel. Dodo, if you kick me again I shall call for help.'

'Call away,' said Dodo.

Jack opened his mouth and howled. An old gentleman, who was just folding his paper into a convenient form for reading, on a seat opposite, put on his spectacles and stared at them in blank amazement.

'I told you I would,' remarked Jack parenthetically.

'It's only Lord Chesterford,' explained Dodo, in a shrill, treble voice, to the old gentleman. 'I don't think he's very well. I daresay it's nothing.'

'Most distressin',' said the old gentleman, in a tone of the deepest sarcasm, returning to his paper.

'Most distressin',' echoed Dodo pianissimo to Jack, who was laughing in a hopeless internal manner.

Dodo led him speechless away, and they wandered off to the little, low wall that separates the street from the square.

'Now, we'll go on talking,' said Jack, when he had recovered somewhat. 'We were talking about that Austrian. What did you say to him?'

'Oh, I've told you. I simply stopped him asking me by telling him I was going to marry someone else.'

'What did he say then?' demanded Jack.

'Oh, he asked me for sympathy,' said Dodo.

'Which you gave him?'

'Certainly,' she answered. 'I was very sorry for him, and I told him so; but we did it very nicely and politely, without stating anything, but only hinting at it.'

'A nasty, vicious, oily brute,' observed Jack.

'Jack, you're ridiculous,' said she; 'he's nothing of the sort. I've told him to come and see us when we're in England, and you'll have to be very polite and charming to him.'

'Oh, he can come then,' said Jack. 'But I don't like him.'

They strolled down the street towards the church, and Dodo insisted on buying several entirely useless brackets, with chamois horns stuck aimlessly about them.

'I haven't got any money,' she observed. 'Fork up, Jack. Seven and eight are fifteen and seven are twenty-two. Thanks.'

Dodo was dissatisfied with one of her brackets before they reached the hotel again, and presented it to Jack.

'It's awfully good of you,' said he; 'do you mean that you only owe me fifteen?'

'Only fourteen,' said Dodo; 'this was eight francs. It will be very useful to you, and when you look at it, you can think of me,' she observed with feeling.

'I'd sooner have my eight francs.'

'Then you just won't get them,' said Dodo,

with finality; 'and you sha'n't have that unless you say "Thank you."'

The verandah was empty, as lunch had begun; so Jack said 'Thank you.'

The news of their engagement soon got about the hotel, and caused a much more favourable view to be taken of Dodo's behaviour to Jack, in the minds of the hostile camp. 'Of course, if she was engaged to Lord Chesterford all along,' said the enemy, 'it puts her conduct in an entirely different light. They say he's immensely rich, and we hope we shall meet them in London. Her acting the other night was really extremely clever.'

Mrs Vane gave quite a number of select little teas on the verandah to the penitent, and showed her teeth most graciously. 'Darling Dodo, of course it's a great happiness to me,' she would say, 'and the Marquis is such a very old friend of ours. So charming, isn't he? Yes. And they are simply devoted to each other.' The speeches seemed quite familiar still to her.

Dodo regarded the sudden change in the minds of the 'shocked section' with much amusement.

'It appears I'm quite proper after all,' she thought. 'That's a blessing anyhow. The colonial bishop will certainly ask me to share his mitre, now he knows I'm a good girl.'

'Jack,' she called out to him as he passed, 'you said the salon smelled like a church this morning. Well, it's only me. I diffuse an odour of sanctity, I find.'

The Princess expressed her opinions on the engagement.

'I'm sorry that you can't marry my brother,' she said. 'You would have suited him admirably, and it would have been only natural for you to stay with your brother-in-law. What shall I give you for a wedding present? There's the bear-skin prayer-book, if you like. Waldenech is very cross about it. He says you told him he mightn't go away, so he has to stop. Are you going out on the picnic? Waldenech's getting up a picnic. He's ordered champagne. Do you think it will be amusing? They will drink the health of you and Lord Chesterford. If you'll promise to reply in suitable terms I'll come. Why didn't you come and see me this morning? I suppose you

were engaged. Of course my brother was proposing to you after breakfast, and then you had to go and talk to your young man. Come to the picnic, Dodo. You shall show me how to throw stones.'

They were going to walk up to a sufficiently remote spot in the rising ground to the east of Zermatt, and find their lunch ready for them. The Prince had no sympathy with meat sandwiches and a little sherry out of a flask, and his sister had expressed her antipathy to fresh eggs; so he had told the hotel-keeper that lunch would be wanted, and that there were to be no hard-boiled eggs and no sandwiches, and plenty of deck-chairs.

The Princess firmly refused to walk as far, and ordered what she said 'was less unlike a horse than the others'; and asked Dodo to wait for her, as she knew she wouldn't be in time. She was one of those people who find it quite impossible to be punctual at whatever time she had an engagment. She was always twenty minutes late, but, as Dodo remarked, 'That's the same thing as being punctual when people know you. I

think punctuality is a necessity,' she added, 'more than a virtue.'

'Haven't you got a proverb about making a virtue of necessity?' said the Princess vaguely. 'That's what I do on the rare occasions on which I am punctual. All my virtues are the result of necessity, which is another word for inclination.'

'Yes, inclination is necessity when it's sufficiently strong,' said Dodo; 'consequently, even when it's weak, it's still got a touch of necessity about it. That really is a comfortable doctrine. I shall remember that next time I want not to go to church.'

'My husband is a very devout Roman Catholic,' remarked the Princess. 'He's got an admirable plan of managing such things. First of all, he does what his conscience—he's got a very fine conscience—tells him he shouldn't. It must be very amusing to have a conscience. You need never feel lonely. Then he goes and confesses, which makes it all right, and to make himself quite safe he gives a hundred roubles to the poor. He's very rich, you know; it doesn't

matter to him a bit. That gets him an indulgence. I fancy he's minus about six weeks' purgatory. He's got a balance. I expect he'll give it me. You have to be very rich to have a balance. He pays for his pleasures down in hard cash, you see; it's much better than running up a bill. He is very anxious about my spiritual welfare sometimes.'

'Does he really believe all that?' asked Dodo.

'Dear me, yes,' said the Princess. 'He has a most childlike faith. If the priest told him there was an eligible building site in heaven going cheap, he'd buy it at once. Personally I don't believe all those things. They don't seem to me in the least probable.'

'What do you believe?' asked Dodo.

'Oh, I've got plenty of beliefs,' said the Princess. 'I believe it's wiser being good than bad, and fitter being sane than mad. I don't do obviously low things, I am sorry for the poor devils of this world, I'm not mean, I'm not coarse, I don't care about taking an unfair advantage of other people. My taste revolts against immorality; I should as soon think of going about with dirty nails. If

I believed what the priests tell me I should be a very good woman, according to their lights. As it is, though my conduct in all matters of right and wrong is identical with what it would be, I'm one of the lost.'

'English people are just as irrational in their way,' said Dodo, 'only they don't do such things in cold blood. They appeal to little morbid emotions, excited by Sunday evening and slow tunes in four sharps. I went to a country church once, on a lovely summer evening, and we all sang, "Hark, hark, my soul!" at the tops of our voices, and I walked home with my husband, feeling that I'd never do anything naughty any more, and Maud and her husband, and he and I, sang hymns after dinner. It was simply delicious. The world was going to be a different place ever afterwards, and I expected to die in the night. But I didn't, you know, and next morning all the difference was that I'd caught a cold sitting in the hayfield—we sang our hymns in a hayfield —and that was the end.'

'No, it's no use,' said the Princess. 'But I envy those who have "the religion," as they say

in our country. It makes things so much easier.'

'What I couldn't help wondering,' said Dodo, 'was whether I should be any better if I had kept up the feeling of that Sunday night. I should have stopped at home singing hymns, I suppose, instead of going out to dinner; but what then? Should I have been less objectionable when things went wrong? Should I have been any kinder to — to anybody? I don't believe it.'

'Of course you wouldn't,' said the Princess. 'You go about it the wrong way. We neither of us can help it, because we're not made like that. It would be as sensible to cultivate eccentricity in order to become a genius. People who have "the religion" like singing hymns, but they didn't get the religion by singing hymns. They sing hymns because they've got it. What is so absurd is to suppose, as my husband does, that a hundred roubles at stated intervals produces salvation. That's his form of singing hymns, and the priests encourage him. I gave it up long ago. If I thought singing hymns or encouraging priests

would do any good, I'd sell my diamonds and buy a harmonium, and give the rest away. But I don't think anything so absurd.'

'David was so sensible,' said Dodo. 'I've got a great affection for David. He told his people to sing praises with understanding. You see you've got to understand it first. I wonder if he would have understood, "Hark, hark, my soul!" I didn't, but it made me feel good inside.'

'Somebody said religion was morality touched with emotion,' said the Princess. 'My husband hasn't got any morality, and his emotions are those excited by killing bears. Yet the priests say he's wonderfully religious.'

'There's something wrong somewhere,' said Dodo.

The party were waiting for them when they came up. The Prince led Dodo to a place next him, and the Princess sat next Jack.

'I'm so sorry,' said Dodo; 'I'm afraid we're dreadfully late.'

'My sister is never in time,' said the Prince. 'She kept the Emperor waiting half an hour once. His Imperial Majesty swore.'

'Oh, you're doing me an injustice,' said she. 'I was in time the other day.'

'Let us do her justice,' said the Prince. 'She was in time, but that was because she forgot what the time was.'

'That's the cause of my being unpunctual, dear,' remarked the Princess. 'To-day it was also because the thing like a horse wouldn't go, and Dodo and I talked a good deal.'

Mrs Vane was eating her chicken with great satisfaction. A picnic with a Prince was so much capital to her.

'I can't think why we don't all go and live in the country always,' she said, 'and have little picnics like this every day. Such a good idea of your Highness. So original — *and* such a charming day.'

The Prince remarked that picnics were not his invention, and that the credit for the weather was due elsewhere.

'Oh, but you said last night you were sure it was going to be fine,' said Mrs Vane, floundering a little. 'Dodo, dear, didn't you hear the Prince say so?'

'Here's to the health of our Zadkiel,' said Dodo, 'may his shadow, etc. Drink to old Zadkiel, Jack, the founder of the feast, who stands us champagne. I'll stand you a drink when you come to see us in England. His Serenity,' she said, emptying her glass.

'What a lot of things I am,' murmured the Prince. 'Don't forget I'm a poor devil whom you pity as well.'

'Do you find pity a satisfactory diet?' asked Dodo saucily.

She was determined not to be frightened of him any more.

The Prince decided on a bold stroke.

'Pity is akin to love,' he said below his breath.

But he had found his match, for the time being, at any rate.

'Don't mistake it for it's cousin, then,' laughed Dodo.

The conversation became more general. The Princess said the mountains were too high and large, and she didn't like them. Jack remarked that it was purely a matter of degree, and the Princess explained that it was exactly what she

meant, they were so much bigger than she was. Mr Spencer plunged violently into the conversation, and said that Mount Everest was twice as high as the Matterhorn, and you never saw the top. The Princess said 'Oh,' and Jack asked how they knew how high it was, if the top was never seen, and Mr Spencer explained vaguely that they did it with sextants. Maud said she thought he meant theodolites, and Dodo asked a bad riddle about sextons. On the whole the picnic went off as well as could be expected, and Dodo determined to have lunch out of doors every day for the rest of her natural life.

After lunch Mr Spencer and Maud wandered away to pick flowers, presumably. Mrs Vane moved her chair into the shade, in such a position that she could command a view of the mountain, and fell asleep. Jack smoked a short black pipe, chiefly because the Prince offered him a cigar, and Dodo smoked cigarettes and ate cherries backwards, beginning with the stalk, and induced the Princess to do the same, receiving two seconds' start. 'It's a form of throwing stones,' Dodo explained. The 'most distressin'

old gentleman was sighted under a large white umbrella, moving slowly up the path a little below them, and Dodo insisted on inviting him to lunch, as it was certain that he had just left the *table d'hôte*. 'He thought it simply charming of me,' she said, as she came back. 'He's quite forgiven Jack for shouting. Besides, I took him the Princess's compliments. He's English, you know.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDITH had stayed on with the Granthams till nearly the end of August. She declined to have breakfast with the family, after she had been there about a week, because she said it spoiled her mornings, and used to breakfast by herself at seven or half-past, which gave her extra two hours at her music; and Lady Grantham complained of being wakened in the middle of the night by funeral marches. So Edith promised to play with the soft pedal down, which she never did.

At lunch Sir Robert used to make a point of asking her how she had got on, and described to her the admirable band in the Casino at Monte Carlo. He was always extremely genial to her, and, when she played to them in the evening, he would beat time with one hand. Now

and then he even told her that she was not playing staccato enough, or that he heard it taken rather quicker at Bayreuth.

Dodo had written to Edith saying that she was coming to stay with her in September, and that Edith must be at home by the second, because she would probably come that day or the third. Edith happened to mention this one night in the hearing of Lady Grantham, who had been firing off home-truths at her husband and son like a minute gun, in a low, scornful voice. This habit of hers was rather embarrassing at times. At dinner, for instance, that evening, when he had been airing his musical views to Edith as usual, she had suddenly said,—

'You don't know how silly you're making yourself, Bob. Everyone knows that you can't distinguish one note from another!'

Though Edith felt on fairly intimate terms with the family, there were occasions when she didn't quite know how to behave. She attempted to continue her conversation with the Baronet, but Lady Grantham would not allow it.

'Edith, you know he doesn't know "God Save

the Queen" when he hears it. You'll only make him conceited.'

'She's only like this when she's here, Miss Staines,' remarked Frank, alluding to his mother in the third person. 'She's awfully polite when she's in London; she was to you the first week you were here, you know, but she can't keep it up. She's had a bad education. Poor dear!'

'Oh, you are a queer family,' said Edith sometimes. 'You really ought to have no faults left, any of you, you are so wonderfully candid to each other.'

'Some people think mother so charming,' continued Frank. 'I never yet found out what her particular charm is.'

On this occasion, when Edith mentioned that Dodo was coming to stay with her, Lady Grantham sounded truce at once, and left her unnatural offspring alone.

'I wish you'd ask me to come and stay with you too,' said she presently. 'Bob and Frank will be going off partridge shooting all day, and Nora and I will be all alone, and they'll be sleepy in the evening, and snore in the drawing-room.'

'I'd make her promise to be polite, Miss Staines,' remarked Frank.

'I want to meet Lady Chesterford very much,' she continued. 'I hear she is so charming. She's a friend of yours, isn't she, Nora? Why have you never asked her to stay here? What's the good of having friends if you don't trot them out?'

'Oh, I've asked her more than once, mother,' said Miss Grantham, 'but she couldn't ever come.'

'She's heard about ma at home,' said Frank.

'I'm backing you, Frank,' remarked the Baronet, who was still rather sore after his recent drubbing. 'Go in and win, my boy.'

'Bob, you shouldn't encourage Frank to be rude,' said Lady Grantham. 'He's bad enough without that.'

'That's what comes of having a mamma with foreign manners. There's no word for "Thank you" in Spanish, is there, mother? Were you here with Charlie Broxton, Miss Staines? She told him he didn't brush his hair, or his teeth, and she hated little men. Charlie's five feet there. He was here as my friend.'

'Do come,' said Edith, when this skirmishing was over. 'Nora will come with you, of course. We shall be only four. I don't suppose there will be anyone else at home.'

'Hurrah,' said Frank, 'we'll have a real good time, father. No nagging in the evenings. We won't dress, and we'll smoke in the drawing-room.'

'I long to see Dodo again,' remarked Miss Grantham. 'She's one of the few people I never get at all tired of.'

'I know her by sight,' said Lady Grantham. 'She was talking very loud to Prince Waldenech when I saw her. It was at the Brettons'.'

'Dodo can talk loud when she wants,' remarked Miss Grantham. 'Did you see her dance that night, mother? I believe she was splendid.'

'She was doing nothing else,' replied Lady Grantham.

'Oh, but by herself,' said Edith. 'She took a select party away, and tucked up her skirts and sent them all into raptures.'

'That's so like Dodo,' said Miss Grantham. 'She never does anything badly. If she does it at all, it's good of it's kind.'

'I should like to know her,' said Lady Grantham. The remark was characteristic.

Lady Grantham returned to the subject of Dodo in the course of the evening.

'Everyone says she is so supremely successful,' she said to Edith. 'What's her method?'

All successful people, according to Lady Grantham, had a method. They found out by experience what *rôle* suited them best, and they played it assiduously. To do her justice, there was a good deal of truth in it with regard to the people among whom she moved.

'Her method is purely to be dramatic, in the most unmistakable way,' said Edith, after some consideration. 'She is almost always picturesque. To all appearance her only method is to have no method. She seems to say and do anything that comes into her head, but all she says and does is rather striking. She can accommodate herself to nearly any circumstances. She is never colourless; and she is not quite like anybody else I ever met. She has an immense amount of vitality, and she is almost always doing something. It's hopeless to try and describe her; you will see. She is

beautiful, unscrupulous, dramatic, warm-hearted, cold-blooded, and a hundred other things.'

'Oh, you don't do her justice, Edith,' remarked Miss Grantham. 'She's much more than all that. She has got genius, or something very like it. I think Dodo gives me a better idea of the divine fire than anyone else.'

'Then the divine fire resembles something not at all divine on occasions,' observed Edith. 'I don't think that the divine fire talks so much nonsense either.'

Lady Grantham got up.

'I expect to be disappointed,' she said. 'Geniuses are nearly always badly dressed, or they wear spectacles, or they are very short. However, I shall come. Come, Nora, it's time to go to bed.'

Lady Grantham never said 'good-night' or 'good-morning' to the members of her family. 'They all sleep like hogs,' she said, 'and they are very cheerful in the morning. They get on quite well enough without my good wishes. It is very plebeian to be cheerful in the morning.'

Although, as I have mentioned before, Sir Robert was an adept at choosing his conversation to suit

his audience, there was one subject on which he considered that he might talk to anyone, and in which the whole world must necessarily take an intelligent and eager interest. The Romans used to worship the bones and spirits of their ancestors, and Sir Robert, perhaps because he was undoubtedly of Roman imperial blood, kept up the same custom. Frank used irreverently to call it 'family prayers.'

To know how the Granthams were connected with the Campbells, and the Vere de Veres, and the Stanleys, and the Montmorencies, and fifty other bluest strains, seemed to Sir Robert to be an essential part of a liberal education.

To try to be late for family prayers was hopeless. They were at no fixed hour, and were held as many times during the day as necessary. Sometimes they were cut down to a sentence or two, suggested by the mention of some ducal name; sometimes they involved a lengthy, pious orgie in front of the portraits. To-night Edith was distinctly to blame, for she deliberately asked the name of the artist who had painted the picture hanging over the door into the library.

Sir Robert, according to custom, seemed rather

bored by the subject. 'Let's see,' he said; 'I've got no head for names. I think that's the one of my great-grandfather, isn't it? A tall, handsome man in peer's robes?'

'Now he's off.' This *sotto voce* from Frank, who was reading Badminton on Cover Shooting.

Sir Robert drew his hand over his beautiful moustache once or twice.

'Ah, yes, how stupid of me. That's the Reynolds, of course. Reynolds was quite unknown when he did that portrait. Lord Linton, that was my great-grandfather—he was made an earl after that portrait was taken — saw a drawing in a little shop in Piccadilly, which took his fancy, and he inquired the name of the artist. The shopman didn't know; but he said that the young man came very often with drawings to sell, and he gave him a trifle for them. Well, Lord Linton sent for him, and gave him a commission to do his portrait, had it exhibited, and young Reynolds came into notice. The portrait came into possession of my grandfather, who, as you know, was a younger son; don't know how, and there it is.'

'It's a beautiful picture,' remarked Edith.

'Ah, you like it? Lord Sandown, my first cousin was here last week, and he said, "Didn't know you'd been raised to the Peerage yet, Bob." He thought it was a portrait of me. It is said to be very like. You'd noticed the resemblance no doubt?'

'A tall, handsome man,' remarked Frank to the fire-place.

'I don't know as much as I ought about my ancestors,' continued Sir Robert, who was doing himself a gross injustice. 'You ought to get Sandown on the subject. I found a curious old drawing the other day in a scrap-book belonging to my father. The name Grantham is printed in the centre of a large folio sheet, with a circle round it to imitate the sun, and from it go out rays in all directions, with the names of the different families with which we have intermarried.'

'I haven't got any ancestors,' remarked Edith. 'My grandfather was a draper in Leeds, and made his fortune there. I should think ancestors were a great responsibility; you have to live up to them, or else they live down to you.'

'I'm always saying to Frank,' said Sir Robert,

'that you have to judge a man by himself, and not by his family. If a man is a pleasant fellow, it doesn't matter whether his family came over with the Conqueror or not. Our parson here, for instance, he's a decent sensible fellow, and I'm always delighted to give him a few days' shooting, or see him to dinner on Sunday after his services. His father was a tobacconist in the village, you know. There's the shop there now.'

Edith rose to go.

Sir Robert lighted her candle for her.

'I should like to show you the few portraits we've got,' he said. 'There are some interesting names among them; but, of course, most of our family things are at Langfort.'

'My grandfather's yard measure is the only heirloom that we've got,' said Edith. 'I'll show it to Lady Grantham when she comes to stay with me.'

Frank had followed them into the hall.

'Family prayers over yet, father?' he asked. 'I shall go and smoke. I hope you've been devout Miss Staines.'

Edith left the Granthams two days after this,

'to buy legs of mutton,' she explained, 'and hire a charwoman. I don't suppose there's anyone at home. But I shall have things straight by the time you come.'

Sir Robert was very gracious, and promised to send her a short memoir he was writing on the fortunes of the family. It was to be bound in white vellum, with their arms in gilt upon the outside.

Edith found no one at home but a few servants on board wages, who did not seem at all pleased to see her. She devoted her evening to what she called tidying, which consisted in emptying the contents of a quantity of drawers on to the floor of her room, and sitting down beside them. She turned them over with much energy for about half an hour, and then decided that she could throw nothing away, and told her maid to put them back again, and played her piano till bed-time.

Lady Grantham and Nora followed in a few days, and Dodo was to come the same evening. They were sitting out in the garden after dinner, when the sound of wheels was heard, and Edith went round to the front door to welcome her.

Dodo had not dined, so she went and 'made

hay among the broken meats,' as she expressed it. Travelling produced no kind of fatigue in her; and the noise, and shaking, and smuts, that prey on most of us in railway carriages always seemed to leave her untouched. Dodo was particularly glad to get to England. She had had rather a trying time of it towards the end, for Jack and the Prince got on extremely badly together, and, as they both wished to be with Dodo, collisions were frequent. She gave the story of her adventure to Edith with singular frankness as she ate her broken meats.

'You see, Jack got it into his head that the Prince is a cad and a brute,' said Dodo. 'I quite admit that he may be, only neither Jack nor I have the slightest opportunity for judging. Socially he is neither, and what he is morally doesn't concern me. How should it? It isn't my business to inquire into his moral character. I'm not his mother nor his mother confessor. He is good company. I particularly like his sister, whom you must come and see, Edith. She and the Prince are going to stay with us when we get back to Winston; and he knows how to be-

have. Jack has a vague sort of feeling that his morals ought to prevent him from tolerating the Prince, which made him try to find opportunities for disliking him. But Jack didn't interfere with me.'

'No,' said Edith; 'I really don't see why private individuals shouldn't associate with whom they like. One doesn't feel bound to be friends with people of high moral character, so I don't see why one should be bound to dislike people of low ditto.'

'That's exactly my view,' said Dodo; 'morals don't come into the question at all. I particularly dislike some of the cardinal virtues—and the only reason for associating with anybody is that one takes pleasure in their company. Of course one wouldn't go about with a murderer, however amusing, because his moral deficiencies might produce unpleasant physical consequences to yourself. But my morals are able to look after themselves. I'm not afraid of moral cut-throats. Morals don't come into the social circle. You might as well dislike a man because he's got a sharp elbow-joint. He won't use it on your ribs, you

know, in the drawing-room. To get under the influence of an immoral man would be different. Well, I've finished. Where are the others? Give me a cigarette, Edith. I sha'n't shock your servants, shall I? I've given up shocking people.'

Dodo and Edith strolled out, and Dodo was introduced to Lady Grantham.

'What an age you and Edith have been,' said Miss Grantham. 'I have been dying to see you, Dodo.'

'We were talking,' said Dodo, 'and for once Edith agreed with me.'

'She never agrees with me,' remarked Lady Grantham.

'I wonder if I should always agree with you, then,' said Dodo. 'Do things that disagree with the same thing agree with one another?'

'What did Edith agree with you about?' asked Miss Grantham.

'I'm not sure that I did really agree with her,' interpolated Edith.

'Oh, about morals,' said Dodo.' 'I said that a man's morals did not matter in ordinary social

life. That they did not come into the question at all.'

'No, I don't think I do agree with you,' said Edith. 'All social life is a degree of intimacy, and you said yourself that you wouldn't get under the influence of an immoral man—in other words, you wouldn't be intimate with him.'

'Oh, being intimate hasn't anything to do with being under a man's influence,' said Dodo. 'I'm very intimate with lots of people. Jack, for instance, but I'm not under his influence.'

'Then you think it doesn't matter whether society is composed of people without morals?' said Edith.

'I think it's a bad thing that morals should deteriorate in any society,' said Dodo; 'but I don't think that society should take cognisance of the moral code. Public opinion don't touch that. If a man is a brute, he won't be any better for knowing that other people disapprove of him. If he knows that, and is worth anything at all, it will simply have the opposite effect on him. He very likely will try to hide it; but that doesn't make it any better. A whited sepulchre is no better than a sepulchre unwhitened. You must act by your own

lights. If an action doesn't seem to you wrong, nothing in the world will prevent your doing it, if your desire is sufficiently strong. You cannot elevate tone by punishing offences. There are no fewer criminals since the tread-mill was invented and Botany Bay discovered.'

'You mean that there would be no increase in crime if the law did not punish?'

'I mean that punishment is not the best way of checking crime, though that is really altogether a different question. You won't check immorality by dealing with it as a social crime.'

There was a short silence, broken only by the whispering of the wind in the fir trees. Then on the stillness came a light, rippling laugh. Dodo got out of her chair, and plucked a couple of roses from a bush near her.

'I can't be serious any longer,' she said; 'not a single moment longer. I'm so dreadfully glad to be in England again. Really, there is no place like it. I hate the insolent extravagant beauty of Switzerland — it is like chromo lithographs. Look at that long, flat, grey distance over there. There is nothing so beautiful as that abroad.'

Dodo fastened the roses in the front of her dress, and laughed again.

'I laugh for pure happiness,' she continued. 'I laughed when I saw the cliff of Dover to-day, not because I was sea-sick—I never am sea-sick—but simply because I was coming home again. Jack parted from me at Dover. I am very happy about Jack. I believe in him thoroughly.'

Dodo was getting serious again in spite of herself. Lady Grantham was watching her curiously, and without any feeling of disappointment. She did not wear spectacles, she was, at least, as tall as herself, and she dressed, if anything, rather better. She was still wearing half-mourning, but half-mourning suited Dodo very well.

'Decidedly it's a pity to analyse one's feelings,' Dodo went on, 'they do resolve themselves into such very small factors. I am well, I am in England, where you can eat your dinner without suspicion of frogs, or caterpillars in your cauliflower. I had two caterpillars in my cauliflower at Zermatt one night. I shall sleep in a clean white bed, and I shall not have to use Keating. I can talk as ridi-

culously as I like, without thinking of the French for anything. Oh, I'm entirely happy.'

Dodo was aware of more reasons for happiness than she mentioned. She was particularly conscious of the relief she felt in getting away from the Prince. For some days past she had been unpleasantly aware of his presence. She could not manage to think of him quite as lightly as she thought of anyone else. It was a continual effort to her to appear quite herself in his presence, and she was constantly rushing into extremes in order to seem at her ease. He was stronger, she felt, than she was, and she did not like it. The immense relief which his absence brought more than compensated for the slight blankness that his absence left. In a way she felt dependent on him, which chafed and irritated her, for she had never come under such a yoke before. She had had several moments of sudden anger against herself on her way home. She found herself always thinking about him when she was not thinking about anything else; and though she was quite capable of sending her thoughts off to other subjects, when they had done their work they

always fluttered back again to the same resting-place, and Dodo was conscious of an effort, slight indeed, but still an effort, in frightening them off. Her curious insistence on her own happiness had struck Edith. She felt it unnatural that Dodo should mention it, and she drew one of two conclusions from it; either that Dodo had had a rather trying time, for some reason or another, or that she wished to convince herself, by constant repetition, of something that she was not quite sure about; and both of these conclusions were in a measure correct.

'Who was out at Zermatt when you were there?' inquired Miss Grantham.

'Oh, there was mother there, and Maud and her husband, and a Russian princess, Waldenech's sister, and Jack, of course,' said Dodo.

'Wasn't Prince Waldenech there himself?' she asked.

'The Prince? Oh, yes, he was there; didn't I say so?' said Dodo.

'He's rather amusing, isn't he?' said Miss Grantham. 'I don't know him at all.'

'Oh, yes,' said Dodo; 'a little ponderous,

you know, but very presentable, and good company.'

Edith looked up suddenly at Dodo. There was an elaborate carelessness, she thought, in her voice. It was just a little overdone. The night was descending fast, and she could only just see the lines of her face above the misty folds of her grey dress. But even in that half light she thought that her careless voice did not quite seem a true interpretation of her expression. It might have been only the dimness and the shadow, but she thought she looked anxious and rather depressed.

Lady Grantham drew her shawl more closely round her shoulders, and remarked that it was getting cold. Edith got up and prepared to go in, and Miss Grantham nestled in her chair. Only Dodo stood quite motionless, and Edith noticed that her hands were tearing one of the roses to pieces, and scattering the petals on the grass.

'Are you going in, Dodo?' she asked, 'or would you rather stop out a little longer?'

'I think I won't come in just yet,' said Dodo; 'it's so delightful to have a breath of cool air, after being in a stuffy carriage all day. But don't

any of you stop out if you'd rather go in. I shall just smoke one more cigarette.'

'I'll stop with you, Dodo,' said Miss Grantham. 'I don't want to go in at all. Edith, if you're going in, throw the windows in the drawing-room open, and play to us.'

Lady Grantham and Edith went towards the house.

'I didn't expect her to be a bit like that,' said Lady Grantham. 'I always heard she was so lively, and talked more nonsense in half an hour than we can get through in a year. She's very beautiful.'

'I think Dodo must be tired or something,' said Edith. 'I never saw her like that before. She was horribly serious. I hope nothing has happened.'

The piano in the drawing-room was close to a large French window opening on to the lawn. Edith threw it open, and stood for a moment looking out into the darkness. She could just see Dodo and Nora sitting where they had left them, though they were no more than two pale spots against the dark background. She was conscious

of a strange feeling that there was an undercurrent at work in Dodo, which showed itself by a few chance bubbles and little sudden eddies on the surface which she thought required explanation. Dodo certainly was not quite like herself. There was no edge to her vivacity; her attempts not to be serious had been distinctly forced, and she was unable to keep it up. Edith felt a vague sense of coming disaster; slight but certain. However, she drew her chair to the piano and began to play.

Miss Grantham was conscious of the same sort of feeling. Since the others had gone in, Dodo had sat quite silent, and she had not taken her cigarette.

'You had a nice time, then, abroad?' she remarked at length.

'Oh, yes,' said Dodo, rousing herself. 'I enjoyed it a good deal. The hotel was full of the hotel class, you know. A little trying at times, but not to matter. We had a charming party there. Algernon is getting quite worldly. However, he is ridiculously fond of Maud, and she'll keep him straight. Do you know the Prince?'

'Hardly at all,' said Miss Grantham.

'What do you think of him, as far as you've seen?' asked Dodo.

'I think he's rather impressive,' said Miss Grantham. 'I felt I should do as he told me.'

'Ah, you think that, do you?' asked Dodo, with the most careful carelessness. 'He struck me that way, too, a little.'

'I should think he was an instance of what Edith meant when she said that to be intimate with anyone was to be under their influence.'

'Edith's awfully wrong, I think, about the whole idea,' said Dodo hastily. 'I should hate to be under anyone's influence; yet, I think, the only pleasure of knowing people is to be intimate. I would sooner have one real friend than fifty acquaintances.'

'Did you see much of him?' asked Miss Grantham.

'Yes, a good deal,' she said, 'a great deal, in fact. I think Edith's right about intimacy as regards him, though he's an exception. In general, I think, she's wrong. What's that she's playing?'

'Anyhow, it's Wagner,' said Miss Grantham.

'I know it,' said Dodo. 'It's the "Tannhauser" overture. Listen, there's the Venus motif crossing the Pilgrim's march. Ah, that's simply wicked. The worst of it is, the Venus part is so much more attractive than the other. It's horrible.'

'You're dreadfully serious to-night, Dodo,' said Miss Grantham.

'I'm a little tired, I think,' she said. 'I was travelling all last night, you know. Come, let's go in.'

Dodo went to bed soon afterwards. She said she was tired, and a little overdone. Edith looked at her rather closely as she said good-night.

'You're sure it's nothing more?' she asked. 'There's nothing wrong with you, is there?'

'I shall be all right in the morning,' said Dodo, rather wearily. 'Don't let them call me till nine.'

Dodo went upstairs and found that her maid had unpacked for her. A heap of books was lying on the table, and from among these she drew out a large envelope with a photograph inside. It was signed 'Waldenech.'

Dodo looked at it a moment, then placed it back in its envelope, and went to the window.

She felt the necessity of air. The room seemed close and hot, and she threw it wide open.

She stood there for ten minutes or more quite still, looking out into the night. Then she went back to the table and took up the envelope again. With a sudden passionate gesture she tore it in half, then across again, and threw the pieces into the grate.

CHAPTER XIX.

DODO slept long and dreamlessly that night; the deep, dreamless sleep which an evenly-balanced fatigue of body and mind so often produces, though we get into bed feeling that our brain is too deep in some tangle of unsolved thought to be able to extricate itself, and fall into the dim immensity of sleep. The waking from such a sleep is not so pleasant. The first moment of conscious thought sometimes throws the whole burden again on to our brain with a sudden start of pain that is almost physical. There is no transition. We were asleep and we are awake, and we find that sleep has brought us only a doubtful gift, for with our renewed strength of body has come the capability of keener suffering. When we are tired, mental distress is only a dull ache, but in the hard, convincing morning

it strikes a deadlier and deeper pain. But sometimes Nature is more merciful. She opens the sluices of our brain quietly, and, though the water still rushes in turbidly and roughly, yet the fact that our brain fills by degrees makes us more able to bear the full weight, than when it comes suddenly with a wrenching and, perhaps, a rending of our mental machinery.

It was in this way that Dodo woke. The trouble of the day came to her gradually during the moments of waking. She dreamed she was waiting for Jack in the garden where she had been sitting the night before. It was perfectly dark, and she could not see him coming, but she heard a step along the gravel path, and started up with a vague alarm, for it did not sound like his. Then a greyness, as of dawn, began to steal over the night, and she saw the outline of the trees against the sky, and the outline of a man's figure near her, and it was a figure she knew well, but it was not Jack. On this dream the sense of waking was pure relief; it was broad day, and her maid was standing by her and saying that it was a quarter past nine.

Dodo lay still a few moments longer, feeling a vague joy that her dream was not true, that the helplessness of that grey moment, when she saw that it was not Jack, was passed, that she was awake again, and unfettered, save by thoughts which could be consciously checked and stifled. It was with a vast sense of satisfaction that she remembered her last act on the evening before, of which the scattered fragments in the grate afforded ocular proof. She felt as if she had broken a visible, tangible fetter—one strand, at any rate, of the cord that bound her was lying broken before her eyes. If she had been quite securely tied she could not have done that.

The sense of successful effort, with a visible result, gave her a sudden feeling of power to do more; the absence of bodily fatigue, and the presence of superfluous physical health, all seemed part of a different order of things to that of the night before. She got up and dressed quickly, feeling more like her old self than she had done for several days. The destruction of his photograph was really a great achievement. She had no idea how far things had gone till she felt

the full effect of conscious effort and its result. She could see now exactly where she had stood on the evening before, very unpleasantly close to the edge of a nasty place, slippery and steep. Anyhow, she was one step nearer that pleasant, green-looking spot at the top of the slope — a quiet, pretty place, not particularly extensive, but very pleasing, and very safe.

The three others were half-way through breakfast when Dodo came down. Lady Grantham was feeling a little bored. Dodo flung open the door and came marching in, whistling 'See the Conquering Hero comes.'

'That's by Handel, you know, Edith,' she said. 'Handel is very healthy, and he never bothers you with abstruse questions in the scandalous way that Wagner does. I'm going to have a barrel-organ made with twelve tunes by Handel, you only have to turn the handle and out he comes. I didn't mean that for a pun. Your blood be on your own head if you notice it. I shall have my barrel-organ put on the box of my victoria, and the footman shall play tunes all the time I'm driving, and I shall hold out my hat

and ask for pennies. Some of Jack's tenants in Ireland have refused to pay their rents this year, and he says we'll have to cut off coffee after dinner if it goes on. But we shall be able to have coffee after all with the pennies I collect. I talked so much sense last night that I don't mean to make another coherent remark this week.'

Dodo went to the sideboard and cut a large slice of ham, which she carried back to her place on the end of her fork.

'I'm going to go a ride this morning, Edith, if you've got a horse for me,' she said. 'I haven't ridden for weeks. I suppose you can give me something with four legs. Oh, I want to take a big fence again.'

Dodo waved her fork triumphantly, and the slice of ham flew into the milk-jug. She became suddenly serious, and fished for it with the empty fork.

'The deep waters have drowned it,' she remarked, 'and it will be totally uneatable for evermore. Make it into ham-sandwiches and send it to the workhouse, Edith. *Jambon au lait.* I'm sure it would be very supporting.'

'It's unlucky to spill things, isn't it?' Dodo went on. 'I suppose it means I shall die, and shall go, we hope, to heaven, at the age of twenty-seven. I'm twenty-nine really. I don't look it, do I, Lady Grantham? How old are you, Edith? You're twenty-nine too, aren't you? We're two twin dewdrops, you and I; you can be the dewdrops, and I'll be the twin. I suppose if two babies are twins, each of them is a twin. Twin sounds like a sort of calico. Two yards of twin, please, miss. There was a horrid fat man in the carriage across France, who called me miss. Jack behaved abominably. He called me miss, too, and wore the broadest grin on his silly face all the time. He really is a perfect baby, and I'm another, and how we shall keep house together I can't think. It'll be like a sort of game.'

Dodo was eating her breakfast with an immense appetite and alarming rapidity, and she had finished as soon as the others.

'I want to smoke this instant minute,' she said, going to the door as soon as she had eaten all she wanted. 'Where do you keep your cigarettes, Edith? Oh, how you startled me!'

As she opened the door two large collies came bouncing in, panting from sheer excitement.

'Oh, you sweet animals,' said Dodo, sitting down on the floor and going off at another tangent. 'Come here and talk at once. Edith, may I give them the milky ham? Here you are; drink the milk first, and then eat the ham, and then say grace, and then you may get down.'

Dodo poured the milk into two clean saucers, and set them on the floor. There were a few drops left at the bottom of the jug, and she made a neat little pool on the head of each of the dogs.

'What are their names?' she asked. 'They ought to be Tweedledun and Tweedledee, or Huz and Buz, or Ananias and Sapphira, or Darby and Joan, or Harris and Ainsworth. It ought to be Harris and Ainsworth. I'm sure, no one man could have written all that rot himself. Little Spencer is very fond of Harrison Ainsworth; he said it was instructive as well as palatable. I don't want to be instructed, and it isn't palatable. I hate having little bits of information wrapped up and given to me to swallow, like a powder in jam.

Did you have to take powders when you were little, Lady Grantham?'

Dodo's questions were purely rhetorical; they required no answer, and she did not expect one.

'It's much nicer being completely ignorant and foolish like me,' she said. 'Nobody ever expects me to know anything, or to be instructive on any subject under the sun. Jack and I are going to be a simple little couple, who are very nice, and not at all wise. Nobody dislikes one if one never pretends to be wise. But I like people to have a large number of theories on every subject. Everyone is bound to form conclusions, but what I dislike are people who have got good grounds for their conclusions, who knock you slap down with statistics, if you try to argue with them. It's impossible to argue with anyone who has reasons for what he says, because you get to know sooner or later, and then the argument is over. Arguments ought to be like Epic poems, they leave off, they don't come to an end.'

Dodo delivered herself of those surprising statements with great rapidity, and left the room to get her cigarettes. She left the door wide open, and in

a minute or two her voice was heard from the drawing-room, screaming to Edith.

'Edith, here's the "Dodo Symphony;" come and play it to me this moment.'

'There's not much wrong with her this morning,' thought Edith, as she went to the drawing-room, where Dodo was playing snatches of dance music.

'Play the scherzo, Edith,' commanded Dodo. 'Here you are. Now, quicker, quicker, rattle it out; make it buzz.'

'Oh, I remember you're playing that so well,' said Dodo as Edith finished. 'It was that morning at Winston when you insisted on going shooting. You shot rather well, too, if I remember right.'

Lady Grantham had followed Edith, and sat down, with her atmosphere of impenetrable leisure, near the piano. Dodo made her feel uncomfortably old. She felt Dodo's extravagantly high spirits were a sort of milestone to show how far she herself had travelled from youth. It was impossible to conceive of Dodo as ever getting middle-aged or elderly. She racked her brains in vain to try to think of any woman of her own

age who could possibly ever have been as insolently young as Dodo. She had the habit, as I have mentioned before, of making strangely direct remarks, and she turned to Dodo and said,—

'I should so like to see you ten years hence. I wonder if people like you ever grow old.'

'I shall never grow old,' declared Dodo confidently. 'Something, I feel sure, will happen to prevent that. I shall stop young till I go out like a candle, or am carried off in a whirlwind or something. I couldn't be old; it isn't in me. I shall go on talking nonsense till the end of my life, and I can't talk nonsense if I have to sit by the fire and keep a shawl over my mouth, which I shall have to do if I get old. Wherefore I never shall. It's a great relief to be certain of that. I used to bother my head about it at one time; and it suddenly flashed upon me, about ten days ago, that I needn't bother about it any more, as I never should be old.'

'Would you dislike having to be serious very much?' asked Edith.

'It isn't that I should dislike it,' said Dodo; 'I simply am incapable of it. I was serious last

night for at least an hour, and a feverish reaction has set in. I couldn't be serious for a week together, if I was going to be beheaded the next moment, all the time. I daresay it would be very nice to be serious, just as I'm sure it would be very nice to live at the bottom of the sea and pull the fishes' tails, but it isn't possible.'

Dodo had quite forgotten that she had intended to go for a ride, and she went into the garden with Nora, and played ducks and drakes on the pond, and punted herself about, and gathered water-lilies. Then she was seized with an irresistible desire to fish, and caught a large pike, which refused to be killed, and Dodo had to fetch the gardener to slay it. She then talked an astonishing amount of perfect nonsense, and thought that it must be lunch-time. Accordingly, she went back to the house, and was found by Edith, a quarter of an hour later, playing hide-and-seek with the coachman's children, whom she had lured in from the stable-yard as she went by. The rules were that the searchers were to catch the hiders, and Dodo had entrenched herself behind the piano, and erected an impregnable barricade, consisting of a

revolving bookcase and the music-stool. The two seekers entirely declined to consider that she had won, and Dodo, with a show of reason, was telling them that they hadn't caught her yet at anyrate. The situation seemed to admit of no compromise and no solution, unless, as Dodo suggested, they got a pound or two of blasting powder and destroyed her defences. However, *a deus ex machina* appeared in the person of the coachman himself, who had come in for orders, and hinted darkly that maternal vengeance was brewing if certain persons did not wash their hands in time for dinner, which was imminent.

'There's a telegram for you somewhere,' said Edith to Dodo, as she emerged hot and victorious. 'I sent a man out into the garden with it. The messenger is waiting for an answer.'

Dodo became suddenly grave.

'I suppose he's gone to the pond,' she said; 'that's where I was seen last. I'll go and get it.'

She met the man walking back to the house, having looked for her in vain. She took the telegram and opened it. It had been forwarded from her London house. It was very short.

'I arrive in London to-day. May I call?

'WALDENECH.'

Dodo experienced, in epitome at that moment, all she had gone through the night before. She went to a garden-seat, and remained there in silence so long that the footman asked her: 'Will there be an answer, my lady? The messenger is waiting.'

Dodo held out her hand for the telegraph form. She addressed it to the caretaker at her London house. It also was very short:

'Address uncertain; I leave here to-day. Forward nothing.'

She handed it to the man, and gave orders that it should go at once.

Dodo did not move. She sat still with her hands clasped in front of her, unconscious of active thought, only knowing that a stream of pictures seemed to pass before her eyes. She saw the Prince standing on her doorstep, learning with surprise that Lady Chesterford was not at home,

and that her address was not known. She saw him turn away, baffled but not beaten; she saw him remaining in London day after day, waiting for the house in Eaton Square to show some signs of life. She saw—ah, she dismissed that picture quickly.

She had one sudden impulse to call back the footman and ask for another telegraph form; but she felt if she could only keep a firm hand on herself for a few moments, the worst would be passed; and it was with a sense of overwhelming relief that she saw the telegraph boy walk off down the drive with the reply in his hand.

Then it suddenly struck her that the Prince was waiting for the answer at Dover Station.

'How savage he will be,' thought Dodo. 'There will be murder at the telegraph office if he waits for his answer there. Well, somebody must suffer, and it will be the telegraph boys.'

The idea of the Prince waiting at Dover was distinctly amusing, and Dodo found a broad smile to bestow on the thought before she continued examining the state of her feelings and position. The Prince's influence over her, she

felt, was local and personal, so to speak, and now she had made her decision, she was surprised at the ease with which it had been made. Had he been there in person, with his courtly presence and his serene remoteness from anything ordinary, and had said, in that smooth, well-modulated voice, 'May I hope to find you in to-morrow?' Dodo felt that she would have said 'Come.' Her pride was in frantic rebellion at these admissions; even the telegram she had sent was a confession of weakness. She would not see him, because she was afraid. Was there any other reason? she asked herself. Yes; she could not see him because she longed to see him.

'Has it come to that?' she thought, as she crumpled up the telegram which had fluttered down from her lap on to the grass. Dodo felt she was quite unnecessarily honest with herself in making this admission. But what followed? Nothing followed. She was going to marry Jack, and be remarkably happy, and Prince Waldenech should come and stay with them because she liked him very much, and she would be delightfully kind to him, and Jack should like him too.

Dear old Jack, she would write him a line this minute, saying when she would be back in London.

Dodo felt a sudden spasm of anger against the Prince. What right had he to behave like this? He was making it very hard for her, and he would get nothing by it. Her decision was irrevocable; she would not see him again, for some time, at any rate. She would get over this ridiculous fear of him. What was he that other men were not? What was the position, after all? He had wanted to marry her; she had refused him because she was engaged to Jack. If there had been no Jack—well, there was a Jack, so it was unnecessary to pursue that any further. He had given her his photograph, and had said several things that he should not have said. Dodo thought of that scene with regret. She had had an opportunity which she had missed; she might easily have made it plain to him that his murmured speeches went beyond mere courtesy. Instead of that she had said she would always regard him as a great friend, and hoped he would see her often. She tapped the

ground impatiently as she thought of missed opportunities. It was stupid, inconceivably stupid of her. Then he had followed her to England, and sent this telegram. She did not feel safe. She longed, and dreaded to see him again. It was too absurd that she should have to play this gigantic game of hide-and-seek. 'I shall have to put on a blue veil and green goggles when I go back to London,' thought Dodo. 'Well, the seekers have to catch the hiders, and he hasn't caught me yet.'

Meanwhile the Prince was smoking a cigar at Dover Station. The telegram had not come, though he had waited an hour, and he had settled to give it another half-hour and then go on to London. He was not at all angry; it was as good as a game of chess. The Prince was very fond of chess. He enjoyed exercising a calculating long-sightedness, and he felt that the Marchioness of Chesterford elect was a problem that enabled him to exercise this faculty, of which he had plenty, to the full.

He had a sublime sense of certainty as to what he was going to do. He fully intended to

marry Dodo, and he admitted no obstacles. She was engaged to Jack, was she? So much the worse for Jack. She wished to marry Jack, did she? So much the worse for her, and none the worse, possibly the better, for him. As it was quite certain that he himself was going to marry Dodo, these little hitches were entertaining than otherwise. It is more fun to catch your salmon after a quarter of an hour's rather exciting fight with him, than to net him. Half the joy of a possession lies in the act of acquisition, and the pleasure of acquisition consists, at least, in half of the excitement attendant on it. To say that the Prince ever regarded anyone's feelings would be understating the truth. The fact that his will worked its way in opposition to, and at the expense of others, afforded him a distinct and appreciable pleasure. If he wanted anything he went straight for it, and regarded neither man, nor devil, nor angel; and he wanted Dodo.

His mind, then, was thoroughly made up. She seemed to him immensely original and very complete. He read her, he thought, like a book,

and the book was very interesting reading. His sending of the telegram with 'Reply paid,' was a positive stroke of genius. Dodo had told him that she was going straight to London, but, as we have seen, she did not stop the night there, but went straight on to Edith's home in Berkshire. There were two courses open to her; either to reply 'Yes' or 'No' to the telegram, or to leave it unanswered. If she left it 'unanswered' it would delight him above measure, and it seemed that his wishes were to be realised. Not answering the telegram would imply that she did not think good to see him, and he judged that this decision was probably prompted by something deeper than mere indifference to his company. It must be dictated by a strong motive. His calculations were a little at fault, because Dodo had not stopped in London, but this made no difference, as events had turned out, to the correctness of his deductions.

He very much wished Dodo to be influenced by strong motives in her dealings with him. He would not have accepted, even as a gift, the real, quiet liking she had for Jack. Real, quiet

likings seemed to him to be as dull as total indifference. He would not have objected to her regarding him with violent loathing, that would be something to correct; and his experience in such affairs was that strong sympathies and antipathies were more akin to each other than quiet affection or an apathetic indifference were to either. He walked up and down the platform with the smile of a man who is waiting for an interesting situation in a theatrical representation to develop itself. He had no wish to hurry it. The by-play seemed to him to be very suitable, and he bought a morning paper. He glanced through the leaders, and turned to the small society paragraphs. The first that struck his eye was this: 'The Marchioness of Chesterford arrived in London yesterday afternoon from the Continent.'

He felt it was the most orthodox way of bringing the scene to its climax. Enter a newsboy, who hands paper to Prince, and exit. Prince unfolds paper and reads the news of—well, of what he is expecting.

He snipped the paragraph neatly out from the paper, and put it in his card-case. His valet was

standing by the telegraph office, waiting for the message. The Prince beckoned to him.

'There will be no telegram,' he said. 'We leave by the next train.'

The Prince had a carriage reserved for him, and he stepped in with a sense of great satisfaction. He even went so far as to touch his hat in response to the obeisances of the obsequious guard, and told his valet to see that the man got something. He soon determined on his next move—a decided 'check,' and rather an awkward one; and for the rest of his journey he amused himself by looking out of the window, and admiring the efficient English farming. All the arrangements seemed to him to be very solid and adequate. The hedges were charming. The cart horses were models of sturdy strength, and the hop harvest promised to be very fine. He was surprised when they drew near London. The journey had been shorter than he expected.

He gave a few directions to his valet about luggage, and drove off to Eaton Square.

The door was opened by an impenetrable caretaker.

'Is Lady Chesterford in?' asked the Prince.

'Her ladyship is not in London, sir,' replied the man.

The Prince smiled. Dodo was evidently acting up to her refusal to answer his telegram.

'Ah, just so,' he remarked. 'Please take this to her, and say I am waiting.'

He drew from his pocket a card, and the cutting from the *Morning Post.*

'Her ladyship is not in London,' the man repeated.

'Perhaps you would let me have her address,' said the Prince, feeling in his pockets.

'A telegram has come to-day, saying that her ladyship's address is uncertain,' replied the caretaker.

'Would you be so good as to let me see the telegram?'

Certainly, he would fetch it.

The Prince waited serenely. Everything was going admirably.

The telegram was fetched. It had been handed in at Wokingham station at a quarter to one. 'After she had received my telegram,' reflected the Prince.

'Do you know with whom she has been staying?' he asked blandly.

'With Miss Staines.'

The Prince was very much obliged. He left a large gratuity in the man's hand, and wished him good afternoon.

He drove straight to his house, and sent for his valet, whom he could trust implicitly, and who had often been employed in somewhat delicate affairs.

'Take the first train for Wokingham to-morrow morning,' he said. 'Find out where a Miss Staines lives. Inquire whether Lady Chesterford left the house to-day.'

'Yes, your Highness.'

'And hold your tongue about the whole business,' said the Prince negligently, turning away and lighting a cigar. 'And send me a telegram from Wokingham: "Left yesterday," or "Still here."'

The Prince was sitting over a late breakfast on the following morning, when a telegram was brought in. He read it, and his eyes twinkled with genuine amusement.

'I think,' he said to himself, 'I think that's rather neat.'

CHAPTER XX.

IF Dodo had felt some excusable pride in having torn up the Prince's photograph, her refusal to let him know where she was gave her a still more vivid sense of something approaching heroism. She did not blame anyone but herself for the position into which she had drifted during those weeks in Switzerland. She was quite conscious that she might have stopped any intimacy of this sort arising, and consequently the establishment of this power over her. But she felt she was regaining her lost position. Each sensible refusal to admit his influence over her was the sensible tearing asunder of the fibres which enveloped her. It was hard work, she admitted, but she was quite surprised to find how comfortable she was becoming. Jack really made a very satisfactory background to her thoughts. She was very fond

of him, and she looked forward to their marriage with an eager expectancy, which was partly, however, the result of another fear.

She was sitting in the drawing-room next day with Miss Grantham, talking about nothing particular very rapidly.

'Of course, one must be good to begin with,' she was saying; 'one takes that for granted. The idea of being wicked never comes into my reckoning at all. I should do lots of things if I didn't care what I did, that I shouldn't think of doing at all now. I've got an admirable conscience. It is quite good, without being at all priggish. It isn't exactly what you might call in holy orders, but it is an ecclesiastical layman, and has great sympathy with the church. A sort of lay-reader, you know.'

'I haven't got any conscience at all,' said Miss Grantham. 'I believe I am fastidious in a way, though, which prevents me doing conspicuously beastly things.'

'Oh, get a conscience, Grantie,' said Dodo fervently, 'it is such a convenience. It's like having someone to make up your mind for you. I like

making up other people's minds, but I cannot make up my own; however, my conscience does that for me. It isn't me a bit. I just give it a handful of questions which I want an answer upon, and it gives me them back, neatly docketed, with "Yes" or "No" upon them.'

'That's no use,' said Miss Grantham. 'I know the obvious "Yeses" and "Noes" myself. What I don't know are the host of things that don't matter much in themselves, which you can't put down either right or wrong.'

'Oh, I do all those,' said Dodo serenely, 'if I want to, and if I don't, I have an excellent reason for not doing them, because I am not sure whether they are right. When I set up my general advice office, which I shall do before I die, I shall make a special point of that for other people. I shall give decided answers in most cases, but I shall reserve a class of things indifferent, which are simply to be settled by inclination.'

'What do you call indifferent things?' asked Miss Grantham, pursuing the Socratic method.

'Oh, whether you are to play lawn tennis on

Sunday afternoon,' said Dodo, 'or wear mourning for second cousins, or sing alto in church for the sake of the choir; all that sort of thing.'

'Your conscience evidently hasn't taken orders,' remarked Miss Grantham.

'That's got nothing to do with my conscience,' said Dodo. 'My conscience doesn't touch those things at all. It only concerns itself with right and wrong.'

'You're very moral this morning,' said Miss Grantham. 'Edith,' she went on, as Miss Staines entered in a howling wilderness of dogs, 'Dodo has discovered a conscience.'

'Whose?' asked Edith.

'Why, my own, of course,' said Dodo; 'but it's no discovery. I always knew I had one.'

'There's someone waiting to see you,' said Edith. 'I brought his card in.'

She handed Dodo a card.

'Prince Waldenech,' she said quietly to herself. 'Let him come in here, Edith. You needn't go away.'

Dodo got up and stood by the mantelpiece, and displayed an elaborate attention to one of

Edith's dogs. She was angry with herself for needing this minute of preparation, but she certainly used it to the best advantage; and when the Prince entered she greeted him with an entirely natural smile of welcome.

'Ah, this is charming,' she said, advancing to him. 'How clever of you to find out my address.'

'I am staying at a house down here,' said the Prince, lying with conscious satisfaction as he could not be contradicted, 'and I could not resist the pleasure.'

Dodo introduced him to Edith and Miss Grantham, and sat down again.

'I sent no address, as I really did not know where I might be going,' she said, following the Prince's lead. 'That I was not in London was all my message meant. I did not know you would be down here.'

'Lord Chesterford is in England?' asked the Prince.

'Oh, yes, Jack came with me as far as Dover, and then he left me for the superior attractions of partridge-shooting. Wasn't it rude of him?'

'He deserves not to be forgiven,' said the Prince.

'I think I shall send you to call him out for insulting me,' said Dodo lightly; 'and you can kill each other comfortably while I look on. Dear old Jack.'

'I should feel great pleasure in fighting Lord Chesterford if you told me to,' said the Prince, 'or if you told him to, I'm sure he would feel equal pleasure in killing me.'

Dodo laughed.

'Duelling has quite gone out,' she said. 'I sha'n't require you ever to do anything of that kind.'

'I am at your service,' he said.

'I wish you'd open that window then,' said Dodo; 'it is dreadfully stuffy. Edith, you really have too many flowers in the room.'

'Why do you say that duelling has gone out?' he asked. 'You might as well say that devotion has gone out.'

'No one fights duels now,' said Dodo, 'except in France, and no one, even there, is ever hurt, unless they catch cold in the morning air like Mark Twain.'

'Certainly no one goes out with a pistol-case, and a second, and a doctor,' said the Prince; 'that was an absurd way of duelling. It is no satisfaction to know that you are a better shot than your antagonist.'

'Still less to know that he is a better shot than you,' remarked Miss Grantham.

'Charming,' said the Prince; 'that is worthy of Lady Chesterford. And higher praise—'

'Go on about duelling,' said Dodo, unceremoniously.

'The old system was no satisfaction, because the quarrel was not about who was the better shot. Duelling is now strictly decided by merit. Two men quarrel about a woman. They both make love to her; in other words they both try to cut each other's throats, and one succeeds. It is far more sensible. Pistols are stupid bull-headed weapons. Words are much finer. They are exquisite sharp daggers. There is no unnecessary noise nor smoke, and they are quite orderly.'

'Are those the weapons you would fight Lord Chesterford with, if Dodo told you to?' asked Edith, who was growing uneasy.

The Prince, as Dodo once said, never made a fool of himself. It was a position in which it was extremely easy for a stupid man to say something very awkward. Lady Grantham, with all her talent for asking inconvenient questions, could not have formed a more unpleasant one. He looked across at Dodo a moment, and said, without a perceptible pause,—

'If I ever was the challenger of Lady Chesterford's husband, the receiver of the challenge has the right to choose the weapons.'

The words startled Dodo somehow. She looked up and met his eye.

'Your system is no better than the old one,' she said. 'Words become the weapons instead of pistols, and the man who is most skilful with words has the same advantage as the good shot. You are not quarrelling about words, but about a woman.'

'But words are the expression of what a man is,' said the Prince. 'You are pitting merit against merit.'

Dodo rose and began to laugh.

'Don't quarrel with Jack, then,' she said. 'He

would tell the footman to show you the door. You would have to fight the footman. Jack would not speak to you.'

Dodo felt strongly the necessity of putting an end to this conversation, which was effectually done by this somewhat uncourteous speech. The fencing had become rather too serious to please her, and she did not wish to be serious. But she felt oppressively conscious of this man's personality, and saw that he was stronger than she was herself. She decided to retreat, and made a desperate effort to be entirely flippant.

'I hope the Princess has profited by the advice I gave her,' she said. 'I told her how to be happy though married, and how not to be bored though a Russian. But she's a very bad case.'

'She said to me dreamily as I left,' said the Prince, '"You'll hear of my death on the Matterhorn. Tell Lady Chesterford it was her fault."'

Dodo laughed.

'Poor dear thing,' she said, 'I really am sorry for her. It's a great pity she didn't marry a day labourer, and have to cook the dinner and slap

the children. It would have been the making of her.

'It would have been a different sort of making,' remarked the Prince.

'I believe you can even get *blasé* of being bored,' said Miss Grantham, 'and then, of course, you don't get bored any longer, because you are bored with it.'

This remarkable statement was instantly contradicted by Edith.

'Being bored is a bottomless pit,' she remarked. You never get to the end, and the deeper you go the longer it takes to get out. I was never bored in my life. I like listening to what the dullest people say.'

'Oh, but it's when they don't say anything that they're so trying,' said Miss Grantham.

'I don't mind that a bit,' remarked Dodo. 'I simply think aloud to them. The less a person says the more I talk, and then suddenly I see that they're shocked at me, or that they don't understand. The Prince is often shocked at me, only he's too polite to say so. I don't mean that you're a dull person, you know, but he always

understands. You know he's quite intelligent,' Dodo went on, introducing him with a wave of her hand, like a showman with a performing animal. 'He knows several languages. He will talk on almost any subject you wish. He was thirty-five years of age last May, and will be thirty-six next May.'

'He has an admirable temper,' said the Prince, 'and is devoted to his keeper.'

'Oh, I'm not your keeper,' said Dodo. 'I wouldn't accept the responsibility. I'm only reading extracts from the advertisement about you.'

'I was only reading extracts as well,' observed the Prince. 'Surely the intelligent animal, who knows several languages, may read its own advertisement?'

'I'm not so sure about your temper,' said Dodo, reflectively. 'I shall alter it to "is believed to have an admirable temper."'

'Never shows fight,' said the Prince.

'But is willing to fight if told to,' said she. 'He said so himself.'

'Oh, but I only bark when I bite,' said the Prince, alluding to his modern system of duelling.

'Then your bite is as bad as your bark,' remarked Dodo, 'which is a sign of bad temper. And now, my dear Prince, if we talk any more about you, you will get intolerably conceited, and that won't do at all. I can't bear conceited men. They always seem to me to be like people on stilts. They are probably not taller than oneself really, and they're all out of proportion, all legs, and no body or head. I don't want anyone to bring themselves down to my level when they talk to me. Conceited people always do that. They get off their stilts. If there's one thing that amuses me more than another, it is getting hold of their stilts and sawing them half through. Then, when they get up again they come down "Bang," and you say: "Oh, I hope you haven't hurt yourself. I didn't know you went about on stilts. They are very unsafe, aren't they?"'

Dodo was conscious of talking rather wildly and incoherently. She felt like a swimmer being dragged down by a deep undercurrent. All she could do was to make a splash on the surface. She could not swim quietly or strongly out of its

reach. She stood by the window playing with the blind cord, wishing that the Prince would not look at her. He had a sort of deep, lazy strength about him that made Dodo distrust herself—the indolent consciousness of power that a tiger has when he plays contemptuously with his prey before hitting it with one deadly blow of that soft-cushioned paw

'Why can't I treat him like anyone else?' she said to herself impatiently. 'Surely I am not afraid of him. I am only afraid of being afraid. He is handsome, and clever, and charming, and amiable, and here am I watching every movement and listening to every word he says. It's all nonsense. Here goes.'

Dodo plunged back into the room, and sat down in a chair next him.

'What a charming time we had at Zermatt,' she said. 'That sort of place is so nice if you simply go there in order to amuse yourself without the bore of entertaining people. Half the people who go there treat it as their great social effort of the year. As if one didn't make enough social efforts at home!'

'Ah, Zermatt,' said the Prince, meditatively. 'It was the most delightful month I ever spent.'

Did you like it?' said Dodo, negligently. 'I should have thought that sort of place would have bored you. There was nothing to do. I expected you would rush off as soon as you got there, and go to shoot or something.

'Like Lord Chesterford and the partridges,' suggested Edith.'

'Oh, that's different,' said Dodo. 'Jack thinks it's the duty of every English landlord to shoot partridges. He's got great ideas of his duty.'

'Even when it interferes with what must have been his pleasure, apparently,' said the Prince.

'Oh, Jack and I will see plenty of each other in course of time. I'm not afraid he will go and play about without me.'

'You are too merciful,' said the Prince.

'Oh, I sha'n't be hard on Jack. I shall make every allowance for his shortcomings, and I shall expect that he will make allowance for mine.'

'He will have the best of the bargain,' said the Prince.

'You mean that he won't have to make much

allowance for me?' asked Dodo. 'My dear Prince, that shows how little you really know about me. I can be abominable. Ask Miss Staines if I can't. I can make a man angry quicker than any woman I know. I could make you angry in a minute and a quarter, but I am amiable this morning, and I will spare you.'

'Please make me angry,' said the Prince.

Dodo laughed, and held out her hand to him.

'Then you will excuse my leaving you?' she said. 'I've got a letter to write before the mid-day post. That ought to make you angry. Are you stopping to lunch? No? *Au revoir*, then. We shall meet again sometime soon, I suppose. One is always running up against people.'

Dodo shook hands with elaborate carelessness and went towards the door, which the Prince opened for her.

'You have made me angry,' he murmured, as she passed out, 'but you will pacify me again, I know.'

Dodo went upstairs into her bedroom. She was half frightened at her own resolution, and the effort of appearing quite unconcerned had given

her a queer, tired feeling. She heard a door shut in the drawing-room below, and steps in the hall. A faint flush came over her face, and she got up quickly from her chair and ran downstairs. The Prince was in the hall, and he did not look the least surprised to see Dodo again.

'Ah, you are just off?' she asked.

Then she stopped dead, and he waited as if expecting more. Dodo's eyes wandered round the walls and came back to his face again.

'Come and see me in London any time, she said, in a low voice. 'I shall go back at the end of the week.'

The Prince bowed.

'I knew you would pacify me again,' he said.

CHAPTER XXI.

DODO was up again in London at the end of the week, as she had told the Prince. Jack was also staying in town, and they often spent most of the day together, riding occasionally in the deserted Row, or sitting, as they were now, in Dodo's room in the Eaton Square house. They were both leaving for the country in a few days' time, where they had arranged to come across one another at various houses, and Dodo, at least, was finding these few days rather trying. She and Jack had arranged to have them together, quite alone, while they were in Switzerland, and Dodo had overlooked the fact that they might be rather hard to fill up. Not that she was disappointed in Jack. He was exactly what she had always supposed him to be. She never thought that he was very stimulating, though never dull, and she

was quite conscious of enough stimulus in herself to make up for that. For the rest he was quite satisfactory. But she was distinctly disappointed in herself. She felt as if her taste had been vitiated by drinking brandy. Mild flavours and very good bouquets of vintages that had pleased her before, sent no message from her palate to her brain. It was like the effect produced by the touch of hot iron on the skin, that forms a hard numb surface, which is curiously insensitive to touch. Dodo felt as if her powers of sensation had been seared in this way. Her perceptions no longer answered quickly to the causes that excited them; a layer of dull unresponsive material lay between her and her world. She thought that her nerves and tissues were sound enough below. This numbness was only superficial, the burn would heal, and her skin would become pliant and soft again; and if she was conscious of all this and its corresponding causes, it could hardly be expected that Jack would be unconscious of it and its corresponding effects.

On this particular morning Dodo was peculiarly aware of it. It was raining dismally outside, and

the sky was heavy and grey. The road was being repaired, and a traction engine was performing its dismal office in little aimless runs backwards and forwards. The official with the red flag had found there was no vehicles for him to warn, and he had sat down on a heap of stones, and was smoking. There was a general air of stagnation, a sense of the futility of doing anything, and no one was more conscious of it than Dodo. She felt that there was only one event that was likely to interest her, and yet, in a way, she shrank from that. It was the searing process over again.

She wondered whether it would do any good to tell Jack of the fact that the Prince was down at Wokingham. She found the burden of an unshared secret exceptionally trying. Dodo had been so accustomed to be before the footlights all her life, that anything of the nature of a secret was oppressive. Her conduct to her first husband she did not regard as such. It was only an admirable piece of by-play, which the audience fully appreciated. Did Dodo then never think of her late husband with tenderness? Well, not often.

A thought seldom remained long in Dodo's mind

without finding expression. She turned round suddenly.

'Jack, Prince Waldenech was at Wokingham.'

'What was he there for?' asked Jack quickly.

'I think he came to see me,' remarked Dodo serenely.

'I hope you didn't see him,' he replied.

Dodo felt a slight stimulus in this subject.

'I saw him,' she said, 'because he came to see me, as they say in the French exercise books. I couldn't hide my head under the hearthrug like an ostrich—not that they hide their heads under hearthrugs, but the principle is the same. He walked in as cool as a cucumber, and said "Howdy?" So we talked, and he said he'd be glad to call you out, and you'd be glad to call him out, and we generally chattered, and then I made him angry.'

'Why did he propose to call me out?' asked Jack coldly.

'Oh, he said he wouldn't call you out,' remarked Dodo. 'He said nothing would induce him to. I never said he proposed to call you out. You're stupid this morning, Jack.'

'That man is an unutterable cad.'

Dodo opened her eyes.

'Oh, he's nothing of the kind,' she said. 'Besides, he's a great friend of mine, so even if he was a cad it wouldn't matter.'

'How did you make him angry?' demanded Jack.

'I told him I was going away to write some letters. It was rather damping, wasn't it? I hadn't got any letters to write, and he knew it and I knew he knew it, and so on.

Jack was silent. He had been puzzled by Dodo's comparative reserve during the last few days. He felt as if he had missed a scene in a play, that there were certain things unexplained. He had even gone so far as to ask Dodo if anything was the matter, an inquiry which she detested profoundly. She laid down a universal rule on this occasion.

'Nothing is ever the matter,' she had said, 'and if it was, my not telling you would show that I didn't wish for sympathy, or help, or anything else. I tell you all I want you to know.'

'You mean something is the matter, and you don't want me to know it,' said Jack, rather unwisely.

They had been riding together when this occurred, and at that point Dodo had struck her horse savagely with her whip, and put an end to the conversation by galloping furiously off. When Jack caught her up she was herself again, and described how a selection of Edith's dogs had kept the postman at bay one morning, until the unusual absence of barking and howling had led their mistress to further investigations, which were rewarded by finding the postman sitting in the boat-house, and defending himself with the punt pole.

Jack was singularly easy-going, and very trustful, and he did not bother his head any more about it at the time. But we have to attain an almost unattainable dominion over our minds to prevent thoughts suddenly starting up in front of us. When a thought has occurred to one, it is a matter of training and practice to encourage or dismiss it, but the other is beyond the reach of the general. And as Dodo finished these

last words, Jack found himself suddenly face to face with a new thought. It was so new that it startled him, and he looked at it again. At moments like these two people have an almost supernatural power of intuition towards each other. Dodo was standing in the window, and Jack was sitting in a very low chair looking straight towards her, with the light from the window full on his face, and at that moment she read his thought as clearly as if he had spoken it, for it was familiar already to her.

She felt a sudden impulse of anger.

'How dare you think that?' she said.

Jack needed no explanation, and he behaved well.

'Dodo,' he said gently, 'you have no right to say that, but you have said it now. If there is not anything I had better know, just tell me so, for your own sake and for mine. I can only plead for your forgiveness. It was by no will of mine that such a thought crossed my mind. You can afford to be generous, Dodo.'

Something in his speech made Dodo even angrier.

'You are simply forcing my confidence,' she

said. 'If it was something you had better know, do you suppose that—'

She stopped abruptly.

Jack rose from his chair and stood by her in the window.

'You are not very generous to me,' he said. 'We are old friends though we are lovers.'

'Take care you don't lose my friendship, then,' said Dodo fiercely. 'It is no use saying "auld lang syne" when "auld lang syne" is in danger. It would be like singing "God save the Queen" when she was dying. You should never recall old memories when they are strained.'

Jack was getting a little impatient, though he was not frightened yet.

'Dodo, you really are rather unreasonable,' he said. 'To begin with, you quarrel with an unspoken thought, and you haven't even given me a definite accusation.'

'That is because it is unnecessary, and you know it,' said Dodo. 'However, as you like. You think you have cause to be jealous or foolish or melodramatic about Prince Waldenech. Dear me, it is quite like old times.'

Jack turned on her angrily.

'If you propose to treat me as you treated that poor man, who was the best man I ever knew,' he said, 'the sooner you learn your mistake the better for us both. It would have been in better taste not to have referred to that.'

'At present, that is beside the point,' said Dodo. 'Was that your unspoken thought, or was it not?'

'If I would not insult you by speaking my thought whether you are right or not,' said Jack, 'I shall not insult you by answering that question. My answer shall take another form. Listen, Dodo. The Prince is in love with you. He proposed to you at Zermatt. That passionless inhuman piece of mechanism, his sister, told me how much he was in love with you. She meant it as a compliment. He is a dangerous, bad man. He forces himself on you. He went down to Wokingham to see you; you told me so yourself. He is dangerous and strong. For God's sake keep away from him. I don't distrust you; but I am afraid you may get to distrust yourself. He will make you afraid of crossing his will. Dodo, will you do this for me?

It is quite unreasonable probably, but I am unreasonable when I think of you.'

'Oh, my dear Jack,' said Dodo, impatiently 'you really make me angry. It is dreadfully bad form to be angry, and it is absurd that you and I should quarrel. You've got such a low opinion of me; though I suppose that's as much my fault as yours. Your opinion is fiction, but I am the fact on which it is founded, and what do you take me for? The Prince telegraphed from Dover to ask if I would see him, and I deliberately sent no answer. How he found out where I was I don't know. I suppose he got hold of the telegram I sent here to say my address was uncertain. Does that look as if I wanted to see him so dreadfully?'

'I never said you did want to see him,' said Jack. 'I said he very much wanted to see you, and what you say proves it.'

'Well, what then?' said Dodo. 'You wanted to see me very much when I was married. Would you have thought it reasonable if Chesterford had entreated me never to see you—to keep away for God's sake, as you said just now?'

'I am not the Prince,' said Jack, 'neither am I going to be treated as you treated your husband. Do not let us refer to him again; it is a desecration.'

'You mean that in the light of subsequent events it would have been reasonable in him to ask me to keep away from you?'

'Yes,' said he.

Jack looked Dodo full in the face, in the noble shame of a confessed sin. In that moment he was greater, perhaps, and had risen higher above his vague self-satisfied indifference than ever before. Dodo felt it, and it irritated her, it seemed positively unpardonable.

'Perhaps you do not see that you involve me in your confession,' she said with cold scorn. 'I decline to be judged by your standards, thanks.'

Jack felt a sudden immense pity and anger for her. She would not, or could not, accept the existence of other points of view than her own.

'Apparently you decline to consider the fact of other standards at all.'

'I don't accept views which seem to me unreasonable,' she said.

'I only ask you to consider this particular view. The story you have just told me shows that he is anxious to see you, which was my point. That he is dangerous and strong I ask you to accept.'

'What if I don't?' she asked.

'This,' said he. 'When a man of that sort desires anything, as he evidently desires you, there is danger. If you are alive to it, and as strong as he is, you are safe. That you are not alive to it you show by your present position; that you are as strong as he, I doubt.'

'You assume far too much,' said Dodo. 'What you mean by my present position I don't care to know. But I am perfectly alive to the whole state of the case. Wait. I will speak. I entirely decline to be dictated to. I shall do as I choose in this matter.'

'Do you quite realise what that means?' said Jack, rising.

Dodo had risen too; she was standing before him with a great anger burning in her eyes. Her face was very pale, and she moved towards the bell.

When a boat is in the rapids the cataract is inevitable.

'It means this,' she said. 'He will be here in a minute or two; I told him I should be in at twelve. I am going to ring the bell, and tell the man to show him up. You will stay here, and treat him as one man should treat another. If you are insolent to him, understand that you include me. You will imply that you distrust me. Perhaps you would ring the bell for me, as you are closer to it.'

She sat down by her writing-table and waited.

Jack paused with his hand on the bell.

'I will be perfectly explicit with you,' he said. 'If you see him, you see him alone. I do not wish to hear what he has to say to you. As he enters the door I leave it. That is all. You may choose.'

He rang the bell.

'There is no reason for you to wait till then,' said Dodo. 'I am going to see him as soon as he comes. Tell Prince Waldenech that I am in,' she said to the footman. 'Show him up as soon as he comes.'

Jack leant against the chimney-piece.

'Well?' said Dodo.

'I am making up my mind.'

There was a dead silence. 'What on earth are we quarrelling about?' thought Jack to himself. 'It is simply whether I stop here and talk to that cad? I wonder if all women are as obstinate as this.'

It did seem a little ridiculous, but he felt that his dignity forbade him to yield. He had told her he did not distrust her; that was enough. No, he would go away, and when he came back to-morrow Dodo would be more reasonable.

'I think I am going,' remarked he. 'I sha'n't see you again till to-morrow afternoon. I am away to-night.'

Dodo was turning over the pages of a magazine and did not answer. Jack became a little impatient.

'Really, this is extraordinarily childish,' he said. 'I sha'n't stop to see the Prince because he is a detestable cad. Think it over, Dodo.'

At the mention of the Prince, if Jack had

Had watching Dodo more closely, he might have seen a sudden colour rush to her face, faint but perceptible. But he was devoting his attention to keeping his temper, and stifling a vague dread and distrust, which he was too loyal to admit.

At the door he paused a moment.

'Ah, Dodo,' he said, with entreaty in his voice.

Dodo did not move nor look at him.

He left the room without more words, and on the stair he met the Prince. He bowed silently to his greeting, and stood aside for him to pass.

The Prince glanced back at him with amusement. 'His lordship does me the honour to be jealous of me,' he said to himself.

. . . . . .

Next day Jack called at Dodo's house. The door was opened by a servant, whose face he thought he ought to know; that he was not one of Dodo's men he felt certain. In another moment it had flashed across him that the man had been with the Prince at Zermatt.

Is Lady Chesterford in?' he asked.

The man looked at him a moment, and then, like all well-bred servants, dropped his eyes before he answered,—

'Her Serene Highness left for Paris this morning.'

THE END.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
FORTHCOMING BOOKS,	2
POETRY,	6
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY,	7
GENERAL LITERATURE,	8
WORKS BY S. BARING GOULD,	9
FICTION,	10
NOVEL SERIES,	11
BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS,	12
ENGLISH LEADERS OF RELIGION,	13
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERIES,	14
SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY,	15

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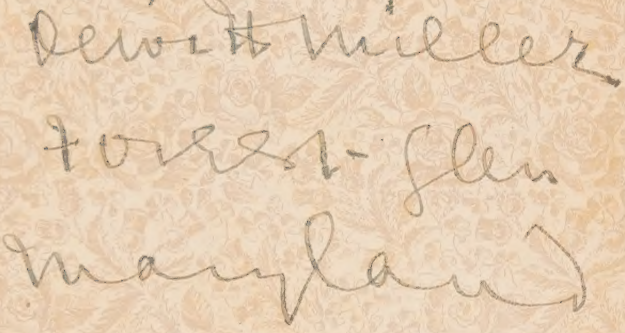
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